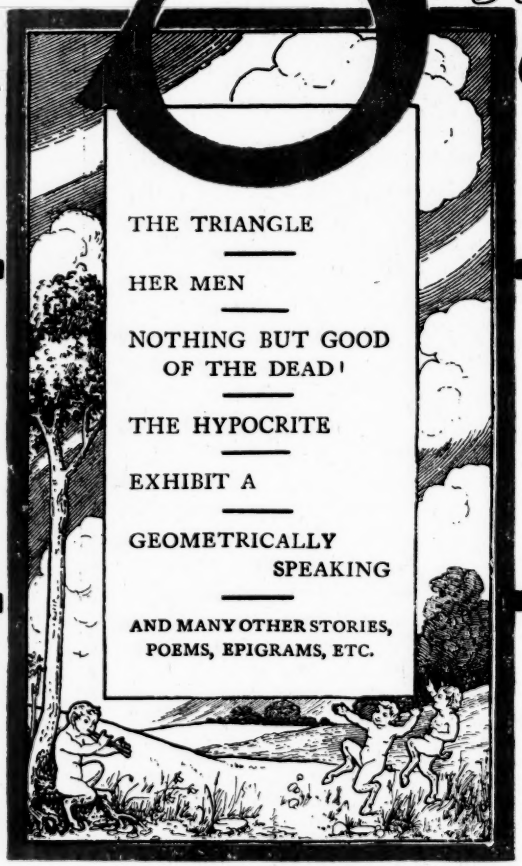
THE SMART SET

A Magazine of Cleverness

To Amuse, Not to Instruct



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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

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Editor—J. W. MILNE

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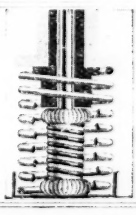

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By A. AHUMADA.

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WHEN VICTORY COMES.

By H. DENNIS BRADLEY.

"Victory"

DAWN!

The birth of a new world.

The world of Youth.

A world in the birth throes of new and clean ideals born of the agony of years of bleeding and suffering.

The birth of Love.

After Ages of Pain.

When Victory comes, and the foul menace of militarism is swept aside!

When Youth, the fetters struck from his limbs, the bandage loosed from his eyes, no longer gagged, a slave, stretches his weary limbs, gazes at the man-mutilated earth, and lifts his eyes to the Sun.

When the tortured world grows once more glad.

When the sap rises, the buds burst into leaves, the blossoms open, and peaceful skies ring with ecstatic songs of mating birds.

When a veil of flame-like flowers and cool green grasses is cast over the scarred and blistered battlefields. When children's laughter rings once more in ruined places and lovers make their tryst where desolation made its home.

When Victory comes.

The Victory that Youth has fought for, bled, and died or.

The Victory of Youth—Love.

* * *

"Victory?" . . . . .

In the Council chambers the shrill triumphant squeals of the old men will issue forth. "It is our Victory! Look what we have gained!"

And Youth, fresh from the memories of the blood, the lice, the stench, the unspeakable filth, will listen with the smile of mockery to the sterile pipings of "Victory! Victory is ours!" from gnarled and skinny throats.

Youth alone has paid the price and alone will claim the Victory. Youth has for years been stricken down, bound hand and foot, hemmed in, thwarted, tongue-tied. Youth has wondered, questioned, fought and sought for some cleansing in the blood-bath. Youth has gained the Victory and brought an end to the Sacrifice, to the Holocaust of the boyhood of the world.

Youth has given everything, while Age, giving nothing, has taken all. And when Age croaks despairing, "We have won the great Victory," they will be unheeded. Age has ruled in the past by Hate, and the world is weary of Hate. Youth will rule in the future by Love. And Love is not for the old, the impotent, the sterile. The boastful cries from withered throats will be unheard, drowned by the fierce pipings of Pan.

Victory means Peace, and Joy, and Life, and Love—a world which seeks beauty and does not goad to deeds of ugliness.

And Youth, his limbs unshackled, no more the slave of Age, his soul his own, is once more free and Lord of Life.

Then Victory comes.

* * *

Victory!

And Love, crowned in roses, laughs aloud.

The rising sap, the mating birds, the bursting blossoms, the young things in the fields.

No longer now the envious hand of Age has power to tear the lover from his mate, to poison sacred wells of love with Death, and spoil each love embrace with tortured fear that it may be the last; to crush the heart of woman with the dread her child may never hold its father's hand.

When love is born again.

After the ages of pain.

When Victory comes and Youth and Love can reign.

When Youth returns to the arms of the Beloved.

When long-craved hope is won. Wonderful hope, revelling in greatness. Wild, throbbing, absorbing, rising to a shout of joy. Intoxicated by power. Passionate! Overwhelming! Sweeping aside convention, tradition, all that is old, all that has lived and is dead.

The birth of a new world.

A world of Love.

So Victory Comes!

* * *

These impressions are not merely idealistic; they are written with a deep and personal knowledge of the mind of the fighting man silently enduring hell, and with a great sympathy for Youth who is paying the whole price in the World Tragedy.—H. D. B.

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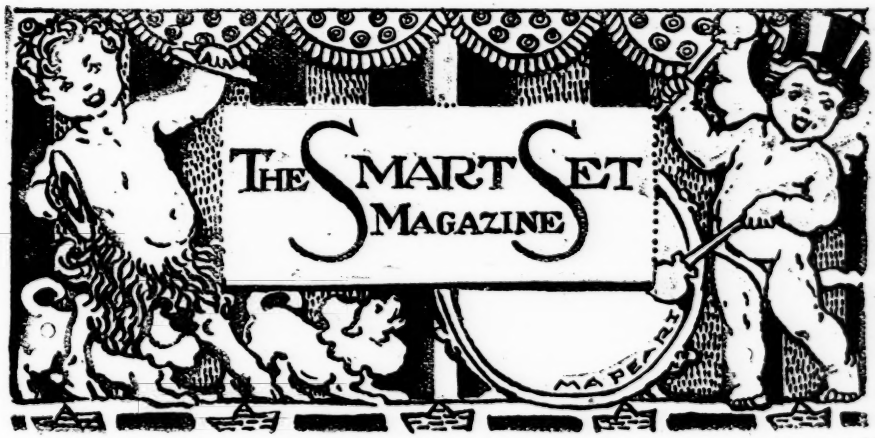

THE GARDEN OF FREDERICA

By Lawrence Vail

I

THERE are too many flowers in Frederica's garden: too many blue and mauve hyacinths, too many solemn voluptuous tulips, too many little white tuberoses. The night suffers drowsily under its burden of fragrance, the shadows are perfumed with doom. The nightingale sings too long in the shrubbery, the fountain never ceases its sad and monotonous plaint. The winds seem to die of a slow maudlin malady, the words on our lips are stillborn. There is too much death magic in Frederica's garden, and Frederica — the night-eyed, the silent, the quivering Frederica—wears too many rapturous glooms.

I had seen her first in the city. She had seemed very dark, very strange, very beautiful.

"How can I tell," she had said, turning her large black pupils upon me, "whether I love you or not? There is stress, there is glare, there are people—how do I know what I feel? And you do not know me. In the dim, in the multitude I am not myself. Only in my garden can you come to know me."

We walk side by side in the garden of too many shadows. All the sweet terrors of night are abroad. They make soft, fearful whisper as they mingle together. All the mysteries of night seem to suffer in Frederica's garden. Frederica seems the suffering lady of night.

Frederica never speaks, her silence is too fearfully eloquent. Frederica knows that she loves me, the murmurs in the garden know it, too. Frederica and the rapturous murmurs are seeking to woo me. I know that once in the city I loved her—in the city of hurry and glare.

Frederica quivers for love of me. The shadows, the little white tuberoses, the maudlin night whispers take up the moan in her. I cry for the mask of a word on her lips, for the mask of day on the shadowy forms of the garden. Night, with its rich darkness, tells too many secrets.

I feel the touch of Frederica's cool

fingers. I tremble, but not for love of her. Over the too rapturous garden a death silence falls. The song of the nightingale breaks in a wild trill. The fountain is sadder than ever as it ceases its monotonous sob. Silence has too many trencherous voices, it pleads in too many keys. The magic night powers are waiting . . . are waiting . . . for me to love Frederica.

The silent pulse of night throbs in Frederica. Her black eyes peer into the chill void of my soul. She is mine, she is mine, I could take her forever to me did I have the courage and will. But my spirit is far away from her. I alone am a stranger in Frederica's garden, I alone am alive to the fret of the world, I alone am dead to the moan in her. She quivers—I feel as though from afar the sting of her magical love. I am heavy, and dull, and afraid.

The night flowers are dead: they exhale in their death many strange, slumberous perfumes. The black trees seem sinister sentinels along the dear wall of a grave. I fear that Frederica—like the sob of the fountain, like the sick wind that died in the trees, like the nightingale of too magical rapture, like the flowers of too gorgeous perfumes—will pass away in love death . . .

II

A SHRILL whistle bores a hole in the magic of night. The train runs along . . . runs along. . . . It groans as it runs. Now it laughs . . . now it laughs. . . . Beside me a fat woman nurses her child. I smell soot. There is dust on my hand . . . black, grimy coal dust. Opposite a man with a red nose is reading a comic paper. Now he laughs . . . now he laughs . . . I feel happy, and careless, and free.

The rain trills on the pane of the window. It trills a ditty of dear commonplace fret. I once heard a nightingale trilling wild, passionate woe. Where was the nightingale? Trees, like black phantoms, run away . . . run away. Perhaps they run to a magical garden where a woman is waiting for me. Was her name Frederica? Perhaps they will tell her that her lover has gone. She may not understand. As long as night lives she will wait. Night must live forever in that garden of too many raptures.

Now the street of the city with its friendly titter and salubrious glare. The fat woman brushes past me and she gives me a comfortable smile. The infant is making a loud, clean, healthy din. Methinks the woman has about her the healthy odour of onion. An urchin shouts in my ear and presses into my hand an evening paper. I smell the damp print, I hear his rough, coarse every-day cry. A car rushes past me and splutters brown mud in my face. I wonder why I am so happy, and careless, and free? I seem to be awakening from some too lovely dream.

Winnie is with me—plain, silly, unlovely Winnie. Her warm little fat hand creeps into mine, and her broad lips break into an affectionate smile. She says she adores me, that the weather is wet, that she has bought a new ribbon, that she would like to eat steak, that the steps I take are too large for her. I laugh very happily. The cars and the Elevated take up my laugh and bear it to the far ends of the city. And I hardly remember—so careless am I—that somewhere in a garden a too lovely and too rapturous woman is waiting for me.

CHRISSY'S WAY

By Louis Wilkinson and Frances Gregg

I

"I CAN'T begin, Freddie; I really can't begin at all!"

Christine Westlake sat at the writing-table in the morning-room of her sister's Kensington house. She played with her pen, she surveyed the blank sheet of notepaper as though it were something female that had just sweetly got even with her. She toyed with the tinkling bracelets on her arm.

Her young friend, Freddie Milbank, opened his innocuous eyes. He looked musingly at Mrs. Westlake's back and took several moments over saying nothing. It was not till the distracted lady had called "Freddie!" and "Freddie, do help!" that he responded.

"Don't appeal to me," he said. "Never could write a letter in my life."

He took up his novel, and once more set about trying to persuade himself that he understood a chapter or two.

Mrs. Westlake swung around on her chair.

"It's distracting!" She slurred her r's engagingly. "Do wake up, Freddie, and tell me what to say."

Young Milbank paused again; he observed her with the air of an expert as she evoked her repertoire for looking becomingly at a loss. She pouted, tapped her foot, arched her brows, crinkled her forehead. Every appropriate symptom was admirably displayed.

Christine Westlake, some years widowed, was the mother of a girl of eighteen, but she had a genius for never looking more than thirty. She was petite and blonde, with a happily childlike complexion, reinforced by a tactfully manœuvred air of soft appeal. She had a touching delicacy of feature and was unerring in the arrangements of her dress and her hair; she never missed any nice point of her right equipment. Her blue eyes, it is true, were a bit small, but they never betrayed her in public. Her destiny was a series of trivial admirations from young men. Freddie was one at the end of a list. The sequence had begun rather to bore her.

"It's distracting," she said again.

"Oh, well, my dear"—Freddie permitted himself a shade of tolerant superiority—"the hang of it's easy enough. Mrs. Bulkeley's asked you with Ruth for the month, and it's the same month you meant to get her engaged to me and Mrs. Bulkeley hasn't asked me, and you don't want to go anyhow, and there it is."

"Of course," — Mrs. Westlake dropped her eyes pensively — "Mrs. Bulkeley's a dear. If it weren't for you—"

"You'd go like a shot. Of course, we all know that." Freddie was pleased with his smartness.

"It's horrid of you to try to be sarcastic. You know very well—"

Christine broke off with a glance that told, for the young man got up, went over to her and began caressing her neck.

"You're a dear, Chrissy," he said, contentedly. "I swear I'm more and more smitten with you every day."

"Oh, but I must write this letter." She shook herself free. "And don't be indiscreet."

She gave him a kiss as one gives a bonbon to a child who is spoiled, but nice. "There. Now help me."

Freddie retreated.

"I can't write the sort of letter you would write, can I?"

As he spoke, taking his time and looking even more than usual as if his only possible profession was to be a young man, Christine Westlake attacked her letter with a desperate rapidity.

"Come now," Freddie approved as he watched her, "come now, that's the way!"

"Oh, now I've forgotten what day Mrs. Bulkeley said. I didn't mean to tear the letter up."

"Do you want me to pick the pieces out of the waste-paper basket for you?"

Freddie did not make the offer with any enthusiasm. He was deep in an armchair. After all, Chrissy was nearer the basket than he was.

"Lazy boy! Oh, no, don't *you* trouble," Mrs. Westlake added as Freddie began a reluctant move. "I can pick them out myself."

She leaned over the basket and scrutinized its contents.

"Well," she murmured. "I wonder—"

She bit her lip and looked at her young friend. He was occupied with his novel.

Christine Westlake gazed again into the basket.

"Well?" again she interrogatively whispered. Then she glanced again at Freddie to see if he was watching her. She hurriedly took the torn scraps of a letter out of the basket. Putting them on the desk, she started to piece them together. She became so absorbed that she forgot Freddie till he looked around and asked what she was up to.

"Oh, just piecing Mrs. Bulkeley's letter together."

"Nonsense! That's *pink* notepaper."

"Well," she turned defensively, "I couldn't help it. You wouldn't look in the waste-paper basket for me. And I saw this there—staring me in the face."

"So of course you read it."

"I didn't—I mean it was *there*."

"No need to explain, my dear. I understand perfectly. As you say, it was there—simply *there*."

"But just see what it is, Freddie," she diverted him excitedly; "just see what it is. 'Dearest Len'—'Love and kisses from Mill.' Poor, dear Miriam!"

Miriam was her sister, wife of "Dearest Len."

"What *will* she say? You see, Freddie," she went rapidly on, "I'd seen the 'dearest' and I'd seen the 'love and kisses' just as I leaned over to take my letter out. I *really* couldn't miss them. And as I'd seen so much, I thought I might as well—you see, I might have been misjudging Leonard."

"And that would have been such a pity."

"But I'm afraid," Mrs. Westlake spoke musingly of her offending brother-in-law. "I'm afraid Leonard has been bad—very bad. Oh, Freddie, he's evidently been behaving outrageously! It's *such* a letter!"

"Well, now you've read it, put it back, or better burn it."

"Don't bluff, Freddie; you know you'd like to read it yourself."

"Not in the least," he airily rejoined. "But of course you don't understand a man's code. But—well—perhaps you'd better let me look it over. Women are so inexact. H'm—h'm—" He frowned portentously. "'Miss—yes—ah, quite so—'kisses'—ah, yes, that reminds me." He lifted a golden curl from the nape of Chrissy's neck and kissed her daintily.

"I do think men are so heartless, so selfish—and so terribly immoral."

Slurring her r's more engagingly than ever, she stroked his hair.

"Oh, well—" Freddie felt uncomfortable and extricated himself. "Oh, well, don't be too hard on Darrell. We aren't all saints. Most men—"

"A typist, too! I know the kind of girl. I never did like the idea of these women who go into offices. They have their reasons for it, you may be sure. It's all a cloak. They simply want to—to be horrid with men. I call it disgusting. They—but it's lovely, isn't it? I have been getting *so* bored. But now it *will* be exciting—"

Chrissy was delicately stressing her

words. Her blue eyes shone with babyish fervour. "Let me see. There's Leonard and 'Mill'—and Miriam and Mr. Sherard—and Ruth and Charlie Lenster—and you and I—"

"Oh, I say!" Freddie broke in. "*Don't!* What are you pairing us off like that for? All right, of course—but one must think of the way a thing sounds—servants, you know—"

He stopped distressed.

"I knew you'd say that." Chrissy was rueful, almost aggrieved. "Poor Miriam!" She revived her sympathies. "I feel so sorry for her—"

"Don't be a cat, Chrissy. There's no reason whatever why she should be told. Mustn't make mischief, y' know."

"She *ought* to know." Christine regarded him with candid eyes.

"Chrissy—" Freddie, increasingly masculine, frowned and squared his jaw. "Chrissy, if you tell her I—I shall be very much annoyed. I shall be—er—very angry, indeed. It would all be deuced uncomfortable. And you staying with them, and all that."

"'Mill,' said Chrissy, dreamily. "Oh, how dreadful! How dreadful! Poor, dear Miriam!"

"Great mistake." Freddie stretched himself. "Stupid of Darrell. Darrell's an ass."

"And Miriam's been thinking he was such a good husband." Christine looked at Freddie pathetically, as much as to say: "Here's another of those disillusionments that innocence brings upon one!"

He kissed her at once.

"It is too bad," she continued, patting his hand. "It is too bad of Leonard, isn't it, Freddie dear, never to let us suspect? Miriam would have been so much more interested in life—"

"Oh, yes—" Dear Freddie was again a little ill at ease. "Oh, yes, of course—but, I say, what *do* you mean?"

"Why—*Freddie!* I don't mean anything! Of course, no woman likes her husband to be *absolutely* faithful. And Miriam, while she loves that nice boy-husband of hers, still she's a bit restless, don't you think? Now, an *affair*—"

Mrs. Westlake broke off as her sister came in.

"Dear Miriam," she addressed Mrs. Darrell at once, "Dear Miriam, you look a little tired."

"Now, don't tell," whispered Freddie.

Christine gracefully swept the bits of paper back into the basket. "Do you remember what date it was Mrs. Bulkeley said?"

"Oh, the eighteenth, you told me." Mrs. Darrell spoke gravely.

She was naturally grave. Some eight years younger than Mrs. Westlake, she looked older.

"I want to ask your advice about Ruth, dear. Freddie—" Christine looked pointedly at him.

"No, you don't. I mean—" he caught himself up.

"You're dining with Mr. Sherard tonight, aren't you? Oughtn't you to go and dress? You know how late you always are."

"Well." Freddie, knowing Christine, gave up.

"Little devil!" he thrust under cover as he went out.

II

"Ruth really *should* be guided, you know."

Miriam Darrell moved away from her sister.

"I think," she said after a pause, "I think Ruth ought to be let alone."

"But you must see how—how very unsuitable this Charlie Lenster is—"

"Well, perhaps Ruth doesn't really care about him."

"Oh, she *will*. I can see that. She's so obstinate. Just because he has no money and no prospects! That's so like Ruth. I've done all I can. Now *your* influence—"

"If she is fond of him—" Mrs. Darrell's dark eyes were preoccupied, her pale face was romantically tense. "No, I don't feel that I could—"

"Oh, I suppose that means you think I'm heartless and horrible. Do try and put yourself in my position. The child can't live on nothing. It's for her good.

Now, Freddie would be so much better—"

"Freddie!" Miriam Darrell was shocked. She had observed the young man and her sister.

"I'd rather not discuss it any more, Christine, really," she added resolutely.

"I didn't expect to find *you* against *me*," Chrissy sighed. "But poor Miriam, it's selfish of me to worry you."

She scrutinized her sister with elfish solicitude. "You're not looking well, dear. I have been inconsiderate."

"I feel perfectly well."

"Yes, in health, perhaps. I didn't mean not well that way. But I've noticed—you won't mind my saying so, dear—that something has been on your mind lately. I've been feeling anxious about you, Miriam, I really have."

"You needn't." Mrs. Darrell was on guard.

"That is so brave of you, Miriam. You are always so strong. I wish I could be like you. But I'm so easily upset—oh, I'm afraid I'm very weak."

"I shouldn't call you weak."

"But I'm *too* sensitive. I take things too much to heart. Now, you are quite different. You are so—so good at making the best of things. And I suppose it is the best way really—in the long run."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing. Only—well, of course." Christine spoke simply and unaffectedly. "Of course I'm very fond of you, you know that, and I can't help being rather troubled by the way Leonard—I don't think—"

"'The way Leonard—' What has Leonard done?"

"I was going to say that I don't think it's fair to you. You're such a *good* wife to him." Chrissy was purring like the small cat she was. "Oh, so much better than most wives! And it isn't as though you hadn't the chance to be—well, not to be. That charming Mr. Sherard—"

"What have you against Leonard?"

"Oh—but you must *know*. Surely you must."

"I do not."

"Of course, I don't mean that it's serious—not really serious. I wouldn't exaggerate for anything or make mischief."

"What is there to exaggerate?"

Chrissy Westlake hesitated, looked considerately reflective, then launched rapidly forth.

"If you were the kind of woman that went in for frivolities and flirtations and all that sort of thing, then of course one might expect it. But you don't—even though there is someone who might—but you never, never have; you couldn't, simply couldn't, you dear good Miriam. And that's why I don't think it's fair of Leonard. I think men should play fair."

"You mean that you think Leonard is carrying on some flirtation or other?"

"Miriam dear! I thought you surely must know. Of course if I had thought you knew nothing—"

Mrs. Darrell rose impatiently.

"What is all this you're driving at, Christine? But I'd better not hear any more. I'd rather not—I—" She weakened.

"I'm so sorry. I am so very sorry." Christine got up too and approached her sister. "If I'd only known, dearest, that you would have been so distressed."

"I really cannot listen to scandal about Leonard."

"'Scandal!'" Chrissy was horrified. "Oh, no, not scandal. Don't misjudge me, please. You might know, Miriam, that I wouldn't be so vulgar as to talk scandal. It was only that when I saw that dreadful letter, I felt I must—I felt you ought to know. But of course I didn't think you were quite in the dark."

"What letter?"

"That wretched little typist girl—the one in his office. She writes Leonard love letters, Miriam! Of course, I know she must have begun it all. Men are so weak—"

"Leonard isn't."

"He *isn't!* Well then, she must be a wonderful girl—"

"You saw the letter? How did you—?"

"Oh—I couldn't help seeing it." Chrissy took on her most ingenuous manner. "It was in the wastepaper-basket. You see I'd torn up my letter from Mrs. Bulkeley and thrown it in the wastepaper-basket, and then I took it out again and there was that other letter. 'Love and kisses from Mill'—'Dearest Len'—I hate to say it. No one could have helped reading it."

"Did you read any more?"

"Oh, no, *of course not.* I wouldn't. A word here or there—that I couldn't help seeing. It was quite enough. I just left the letter there—where it was. It's there now—in the wastepaper-basket."

"Have you told Freddie?"

"Oh, dear, no. Ssh. Here's Ruth! We were just talking of you, darling," Christine Westlake cooed to her daughter.

The girl looked at her, and then, more closely at Mrs. Darrell.

"What's the matter, Aunt Miriam?" she asked.

"Aunt Miriam is overtired. I've been telling her that she must take care of herself. You see, dear, Ruth notices, too, that you're not quite up to the mark."

"I didn't. I thought she was looking unusually fit."

"Still a suffragette, Ruthy," her aunt teased.

Ruth nodded. "It lasted till lunch-time. Then Freddie came and held the banner, and he looked such a lady, I couldn't any more. Didn't I say—" she turned to her mother, "didn't I say Aunt Mirrie was different? She almost laughed. She's been a perfect bunch of miseries ever since we came."

"Dear Ruth is quite getting that smart American, isn't she?" Chrissy was all gentle maternal pride.

"Aunt Miriam, Charlie is bringing you some roses. He'll be here in a moment."

"'Charlie?'—oh"—Chrissy bit her lip—"you mean Mr. Lenster, don't you, Ruth? Can he—quite—with his income—what I mean is, without an income—roses?"

"Nonsense, mother."

"Dear, thoughtful boy, how kind of him!" Miriam Darrell murmured.

"I do think he's handsome. Don't you, Aunt Miriam?"

"No you don't, Ruth, you know you don't."

"Then why does she say so, Chrissy?"

"'Because she knows it teases,'" Mrs. Westlake quoted good-humouredly.

"I don't—he is. You *are* handsome, you know," Ruth added defiantly to the young man who stood in the doorway.

"And you're a suffragette, which isn't handsome," Charlie Lenster answered gaily. "Do tell me she isn't, Mrs. Westlake—not really a suffragette!"

"Ruth — dear, funny child, she thinks she is." Chrissy's manner was distant.

"These are for you, Mrs. Darrell."

There was a charming grace in the way Charlie Lenster spoke and moved, and he *was* handsome, as Ruth had said. He was ruddy and of a fair countenance, like David, but the contrast between him and Goliath would not have been so piquant as that between Goliath and the David lad. For Lenster was built with Saxon solidity, he was unchallengeably robust; even his rather closely-cropped light curls gave an impression of strength. He mellowed his physical force very happily by the glinting good humour of his grey-blue eyes—a good humour that you had to recognize and respond to at once, but upon which you would have been much too wisely wary ever to impose.

"They are lovely, Mr. Lenster. But why did you bring them to me?" Miriam clasped the glowing flowers to her bosom.

"No reason. You rather made me think of them. You seemed like the dark, closed heart of a rose, and Ruth here like any one of the little crisp, curling petals. Shall we put them in water together? I want to talk to you." They went out.

Ruth, when her aunt had left, moved restlessly about. She had an air of dissatisfaction. Her mother watched her placidly.

"She does look different." When the girl spoke she spoke irritably. "Upset about something, I thought. What is it, mother, do you know?"

"I ought not to tell you, Ruth."

"Then don't." Ruth sat down at the writing table.

That bored Chrissy.

"Don't be a prig," she was mechanically protesting when the parlour maid opened the door and announced:

"Mr. Sherard."

There followed a man in evening dress, a man who gave a first impression of unassailable moderation. He looked moderately legal, moderately successful, moderately a gentleman, and moderately young. His moderation was so designedly there as to seem almost artificial. He first greeted Mrs. Westlake with moderate geniality and then, moderately jocular, he turned to Ruth.

"No, Miss Westlake, really I daren't approach you. My nerves are completely shattered. Your sisters-in-arms have just been trying to burn down the Law Courts!"

"What philanthropy! No more lawsuits."

Ruth was sufficiently her mother's daughter to show a veiled sex-consciousness. Sherard was, of course, within due bounds gallant.

"I don't believe you are really on their side." He made a little bow.

"Oh, I am, though. Not that the vote matters in the least. All that is quite obsolete."

"But why in the world, then?"

"It's such splendid training. Oh, but it is! It's all against the law—*and* the prophets!"

"Ruth, dear—" Mrs. Westlake wore the half-deprecating smile of maternal tolerance. "Ruth, dear, do remember—"

"Mr. Sherard's a prophet, I know that." The girl looked gaily at him.

Before he could reply Chrissy Westlake intercepted again.

"Ruth is such a tease. But, you see, she isn't really a suffragette, Mr. Sherard. I always said she wasn't really. It's only that she thinks it fun to try and shock people."

"My mother has a mother's feelings, you see."

Sherard looked a little bewildered.

"Well, well," he said vaguely, "but where's Master Freddie? I looked in to take him on with me to dinner."

Mrs. Westlake suggested that Freddie should be found by Ruth. He was sure, she said, to be practising billiards or something. Ruth asked Sherard to come with her, and the barister, with his air of industrious chivalry, bowed and stressed his affable consent.

"But I'm too old to be converted to anything," he added facetiously as they went out.

III

Chrissy, left alone, sat down again at the writing table. She looked at the waste-paper basket, hesitated, then began to take out the pieces of paper, arranging them on the table. The farther door opened suddenly and Leonard Darrell came in, just back from the office. He was a fair, tall man, with a spoiled boyish face.

"Miriam here?" he asked.

His small hazel eyes rested suspiciously on his sister-in-law, who was looking frightened and caught. She put her hand over the torn bits of paper.

"What is it, Chrissy?" Darrell continued. "What are you doing?"

He crossed rapidly to her.

"Oh, nothing. Writing a letter."

"What's this, eh?" The man had caught sight of a piece of the pink notepaper near the edge of the table. He took it up.

"What's this? What have you been picking out of the waste-paper basket? Good Lord!" he went on, "what infernal mischief are you up to now? What have you got there under your hand, eh?"

Christine would not speak. She

stared at him and tightened her fingers.

"Oh, you needn't tell me." Darrell stared back at her. "I know perfectly well. So I've caught you—rummaging about, messing about, in the waste-paper-basket! A pretty thing to do in your host's house. Give it up—come!"

He took her hand roughly, and she let the pieces of paper drop. Her lips trembled.

"You—boy! Stop it—this isn't jiu-jitsu." Chrissy spoke with babyish appeal.

"Have you told Miriam?"

"No. I—"

She moved towards him.

"But don't think I'm against you, Leonard." She gestured pacifically. "I think, of course, considering that Miriam and Mr. Sherard—"

"Miriam and Sherard! You little devil, what do you mean?—Miriam and Sherard—well!"

"*That's* what I mean—that—what I said. Of course *nobody* ought to go fooling about *your* waste-paper-basket, but Miriam, at her age—and when you look so young and—er—handsome—and then overexcited by all this attention of Sherard's—"

"Look here, have you been putting any of these ideas into Miriam's head? Most awful dam nuisance—jealous wife—eh, what?"

"How could you think I would! Leonard, I thought you knew me better."

"H'm, well—do you know what? I don't believe you. You're out after something, though the Lord knows what! I just don't believe you at all!"

Chrissy Westlake collapsed on a chair. She put her hands to her face and began to cry. The man, ejaculating truculently, paced the room.

A moment later the entrance of Miriam Darrell facilitated the flow of her sister's emotion.

"Christine!" she cried. "Leonard! What's the matter?"

She met Darrell's hostile gaze.

Chrissy broke into pseudo-hysterical sobbing.

"Oh, I see," Miriam went on, "it's about that letter."

"So you do know!" Darrell struck the palm of one hand with his fist.

Mrs. Darrell put her hand on his arm, Chrissy sobbed more convulsively.

"I never heard of anything to beat this, upon my soul!" Darrell shook his wife off. "A couple of women raking about in a man's waste-paper-basket, nosing him out—"

"I did nothing of the kind," said Miriam coldly.

She sat down and narrowly observed her husband.

From outside the room came sounds of approaching footsteps. Miriam started. Freddie's voice was heard apologizing for keeping Sherard waiting. Then came Sherard's voice, in amiable reassurance.

"They mustn't come in here." Miriam rose in haste. "They've that nice Charlie Lenster with them. He's really almost a stranger. Shall we keep them out? Or shall we forget all this for a while? Chrissy, you must see—"

The door opened.

"Just want to get my cigarette-case," said Freddie.

Ruth, Sherard and Lenster were behind him.

Chrissy continued to sob.

"Mother!" Ruth hurried to her. "Mother, what is it?"

The others were discreetly withdrawing when Darrell stopped them.

"Don't go, sir," he addressed Sherard. "I wish to tell you that in future I intend to have my house to myself. I no longer intend to entertain spies, or eavesdroppers, or—"

"You're forgetting yourself, Darrell." Sherard drew himself up in the correct manner.

"I say,"—Freddie lounged between them—"I say, we mustn't have scenes, y'know. Keep calm, old chap, for the Lord's sake."

Chrissy got up, and became at once, for them all, the central figure.

"He has insulted me, Ruth," she said, wiping her eyes. "He has insulted me

horribly. Of course we must leave at once."

"Oh, mother—again! You *are* dreadful. I do hope she hasn't been annoying you too much, Uncle Len?"

"Please control yourself, Darrell." Sherard was taking the situation in hand. "These ladies—"

"What right have you to talk to me? Damme if I'll be lectured in my own house! You're an interloper, sir! No"—Darrell looked furiously at the barrister—"I don't think I happen to want *you* to—I—"

"Leonard," his wife intervened, "Leonard—"

Darrell turned upon her.

"Understand me," he declared, "I shall explain nothing! It is perfectly easily explained, but I decline to explain it. I demand an apology—an apology from both of you!"

"I have done nothing that calls for an apology." Miriam lowered her voice.

Sherard, with full measure of dignity and reserve, was conferring with Freddie and Lenster.

"We've no business here," he said, "and the man has grossly insulted me. But really, I hardly like to go. Darrell in this violent state, and these ladies—"

"Black blood, I'm afraid." Freddie gave a shrug. "He's not a thoroughbred, y'know. It's devilish awkward."

"Well, it's not so bad for you, but I really don't know them well at all. Perhaps—if I can— It might make a diversion. Ah, Miss Westlake—Ruth—" Lenster's soft insistence of tone caught the girl's attention. "May I have that article on Woman's Suffrage. I'm just off."

"Oh, Ruth!" Chrissy's tone was importunate as she mopped her eyes with her bit of lace. "*Freddie* wants to read that article."

"Freddie? Oh, you mean Mr. Milbank, don't you, mother?" Ruth cut in viciously. "If you'll wait, Charlie, I'll get it. Mother and I are just going. Do please come, Mother, if we're to go."

Mrs. Westlake continued to manipulate her handkerchief.

"I have never"—she took her daughter's arm—"I have never been so insulted. I have never had such things said to me."

"Dear Aunt Miriam!" Ruth went to Mrs. Darrell and kissed her. "How can we leave you here? We are going to Blakeley's Hotel," she whispered, "Blakeley's Hotel. You know where it is?"

"What do you mean?" Darrell, partly overhearing, fell into fresh fury. "What hotel did you say? You dare—impertinent little jackanapes! You take her away, will you? You stand between husband and wife! You! Good Lord, what next? What are we coming to?"

"Really, Ruth dear"—Chrissy had begun to show a suppressed interest in the scene—"really, you cannot. We mustn't put ourselves in the wrong."

"No—er—hang it," Freddie chimed in, "that's a bit over the line."

"I'm afraid it is, Miss Westlake. Sherard lent his authoritative weight.

"H'm," said Darrell sharply, "you're *afraid* it is, are you? Well, I will not allow my wife to leave my house if she wants to. Understand that, all of you! You, Sherard, you're a lawyer. Yes, I've got you there. She *can* go to any hotel she wants to. Yes"—he turned to Ruth—"I've got *you*—you immoral young woman!"

"Darrell, take care what you're saying." Sherard raised his hand professionally. "You talk of the law. This is slander before witnesses."

"I don't care. It *is* immoral to try and persuade a wife not to obey her husband. I'm justified. What was the name of that hotel?"

Ruth gave him a steady, contemptuous look.

"Makes no difference," Darrell went on. "I shall take good care—"

"Please leave us alone!" Miriam at last succeeded in interrupting. "I've no intention whatever of going away from him."

"You may talk!" Darrell shouted.

"You may talk your head off, but I say my wife is going to that hotel."

"But I say, old chappie!" Freddie interposed. "What *are* you talking about? This doesn't make sense to me!"

"Oh, nothing ever makes sense to you, Freddie. Do keep still. Mother, are you coming? And don't you stir, Aunt Miriam!" Ruth's youthful indignation bore her on.

"Where'd these roses come from? Who brought them?" Darrel was still storming.

"I did." Lenster's cool tone superimposed itself upon the scene. "Pretty, aren't they?"

"*Who* are?" Freddie looked feebly enlivened.

"Isn't that just like Freddie?" Ruth broke in caustically. "He hears 'pretty' and at once he begins to think of girls and asks, '*Who* are?' You do make me tired, Freddie. *Are* we going?"

"You should obey your husband, Miriam." Chrissy's tone was sepulchral as she moved towards the door with Ruth. "Blakeley's Hotel," she added, as the men closed in round her, Darrell himself instinctively taking part in the escort, "Blakeley's Hotel—tomorrow at six. And I always did say that housemaid neglected her duties. If she'd only emptied that waste-paper-basket!"

IV

CHRISTINE WESTLAKE, a few hours later, was reclining with a magazine on her knees in the largest armchair in a private sitting-room of Blakeley's Hotel. The sitting-room led to a bedroom, and the communicating door was open, revealing the presence of Ruth on the other side. The girl was taking things from trunks and valises, hanging them up, putting them in drawers.

"Ruth, darling"—Mrs. Westlake stifled a resigned yawn—"I am so sorry you have to tire yourself like this. How I wish we could afford a maid for you! But couldn't we get somebody in the hotel? Not necessary! Oh, well—I feel so exhausted. Yes, I'm quite tired out. And I couldn't manage to eat any dinner." She tapped her foot fretfully. "I think I shall ring for something. A little broth perhaps—a few pieces of toast."

"I'll ring." Ruth came in and rang the bell.

"Twice for the waiter, I think, dear. And now do sit down and talk to me. You will get so very tired, poor child. "You must rest a little."

"It wouldn't rest me to sit down and talk."

"I wish I could remember Mrs. Bulkeley's date for certain. How tiresome! I left her letter in the waste-paper-basket."

"For heaven's sake, don't talk about the waste-paper-basket. The waste-paper-basket is simply tragic!"

"How can you laugh, Ruth? I'm sure I can hardly help crying when I think of it all. Your poor dear Aunt Miriam! And it was a dreadful nuisance our having to go in that way."

"I shouldn't have said this hotel. We can't afford to stay here for long."

"My dear *child!* You are so sweet and young sometimes. We shall be back again to-morrow."

"Mother, you're amazing. How can we possibly—?"

"I told you we needn't do much unpacking. Come in." She spoke to the waiter's knock.

"Oh, I want something to eat," she told him. "Something light. A little—a little— What have you got, waiter?"

"You could have some chops, madam, in a few minutes. Or I could bring you a nice piece of steak."

"Well, I really wanted a little broth—or something light of that kind."

"Very good, madam."

"But if you really only have the chops—or the steak—I think, perhaps—"

"How tiresome," Ruth teased in an undertone, "how tiresome of them to have only chops or steak!"

"I think perhaps I might take just

a trifle—a shade of steak, perhaps. A little underdone, waiter."

The waiter confidentially assented. "Anything further, madam?" he asked.

"Yes, I really do *need* nourishment." Christine addressed no one in particular. "Oh, waiter—yes—I think you may bring a bottle of Burgundy. A half bottle, of course. Such a very wearing day."

"And any vegetables, madam?"

"Just what you happen to have. Chipped potatoes—a few sprouts—just something quite light."

"Yes, madam. Anything further?"

"Oh, no, nothing. That is *quite* all."

She leaned back, exhausted, and the waiter went.

"I can't eat very much when I'm so tired. I am so dreadfully overdone."

"Never mind, Mother dear, let's hope the steak won't be."

"The steak? The steak? What has the steak to do with it? Ruth dear," she added as the girl laughed, "I do think you are sometimes a little silly. And very unsympathetic. But you always were unsympathetic."

She took up her magazine. There was a pause. Ruth turned to the bedroom.

"Did she want us very much?" she asked, looking back.

"Who? Mrs. Bulkeley? I don't think—well, yes, she did."

"She was awfully good to us. I shall go. You needn't."

"But you can't. You're my chief reason for not going."

Ruth turned. "Oh, of course. Might spoil my chances of getting married to Freddie. But that's not really the point. The point is that you hate going, isn't it?"

"You know I don't want to go." Her mother shifted from a plaintive to a peevish tone. "And I can't let you go alone. You must see that. It wouldn't look well at all. If we neither of us go, it's quite natural."

"Yes, you can always say that you have me to consider."

"I can't be dragging you all over the place"—Mrs. Westlake warmed to her words—"a young girl. Breaking off your art education, spoiling your chances—"

"Oh, yes, it all washes very well."

"I do wish you wouldn't take that tone, Ruth. You are so hard." Christine sighed.

"I'm not going to marry Freddie, anyhow, even if he asks me."

"Ruth!" The mother quickened indignantly. "After all this—"

"Now I've given you something to cry for. That really is hard of me, isn't it?"

"I think you treat me abominably. I never should have dared to speak to my mother as you speak to me. Freddie is well off. He's young, and you're attracted to him, you know you are."

"Oh, Freddie is well enough. He hasn't any brains, of course, but that isn't altogether a bad thing. And he would probably go on making love to you for quite a long time after he was married to me."

"Ruth! You are horrible!"

"I should be relieved. And it would be much more interesting than the usual relations with a mother-in-law." She surveyed Mrs. Westlake. "I'm glad you're so pretty, Mother. I like your being so slender still, and looking so young, and having such a particularly nice complexion, and such enchanting blue eyes. I'm dark, so Freddie would have the advantage of both types."

"Ruth, you are really—"

Ruth's wholesome colour did not deepen; the gaze of her clear brown eyes was no less direct.

"Freddie's appreciation of you," she went on, "really is rather a good reason for my marrying him."

"Ruth, you know I don't like this kind of talk. It may be very clever and modern and all that, but I don't like it. And you know well enough that Freddie is only a boy to me."

"Dear Mother!"

Ruth stood up.

Chrissy Westlake, engaged though she was at the moment by impatience and pique, appreciated the attractive-

ness of her daughter's light, firm figure with its poise of young aplomb.

"Why won't you marry him?" she asked querulously. "He's not stupid at all. Why, he often says quite clever things. I'm sure he'll make a success at the bar. Mr. Sherard is being very useful, he's helping Freddie a great deal. You'll see Freddie in Parliament before very long."

"I don't particularly want my husband to be in Parliament. And as a matter of fact I'm going to marry Charlie, if I marry anyone. I'm beginning to hate the idea of a husband."

"Ruth, for heaven's sake don't start being unnatural."

"Oh, I'm not unnatural." The girl laughed teasingly. "I'm perfectly normal. I enjoy playing with Freddie just as much as you do. But I'm not going to marry him."

"I *hate* the way you talk of these things. It's—it's abominable."

"You'll get used to it in time, Mother. Of course, I know that 'Deeds not words' is the conventional motto."

"Well, anyhow, you aren't really like that."

"Like what?"

"Like what you pretend to be. It's these art clubs and lectures and Socialists and suffragettes and teas with young poets and people who write for the papers and put all these ideas into your head. It's only a fad; you'll grow out of it. Thank goodness, you are a lady, anyhow."

"It's possible to grow out of even that."

Ruth was going, but with "Why don't you want to marry Freddie?" her mother appealed again.

"Because—" The girl turned and hesitated. "Because Aunt Miriam is married, because *you* were married."

"If you are going to be indecent!"

"Well, you asked for it, and you got it. But don't you see—can you help seeing—how absurd it all is?" Growing self-conscious, she flushed, but her embarrassment thrust her on. "This bond that isn't a bond really, but you have to behave as though it were. What tie is there between Aunt Miriam and Uncle Leonard? You know perfectly well"—she began to enjoy the fervour of her emotional exercise—"perfectly well, but the extraordinary thing is that you seem really to like them to be in that kind of absurd position. Oh, I've noticed it again and again. But I suppose it doesn't matter."

"Of course it doesn't matter." Mrs. Westlake was undisturbed and cold. "But you are really ridiculous."

"You know it's true. Why, when something or other—some trifle—a remark of his or a movement of hers—has brought out the—well, the stupidity of their being together at all, I've seen you positively enjoying it! And Society enjoys it. Society has a peculiar satisfaction!"

Chrissy Westlake yawned.

"It's all too dreadfully bad form and too immoral," she said lazily, "and too absurd. I'm sure most of the marriages you know anything about are thoroughly satisfactory."

Ruth hesitated. She gave her mother a look of whimsically affectionate irony—a taking look.

"Mother," she said, "of course I know *you* haven't been unhappy. You always come so well out of everything. The household never had any power over you. It's a great art to know how to take things your way, and I admire you immensely. But I'm afraid I'm not your type. I'll have to marry for love."

"Well, I don't mind your loving Freddie. I rather want you to."

"And as his mother-in-law you'd feel that *you* should love him too?"

"I'm sure if it were my duty—my real duty—"

"Yes, Mother dear, you commit all of the conventions, and you manage to get out of them. It's quite remarkable, the way you do it."

"Really, Ruth, I don't understand."

"Well, I'm acquitting you, at any rate. I don't think *you* ought to love."

"Yes. But I don't like your not thinking so—not in that way. I'd—"

Mrs. Westlake looked for the moment almost insecure—"I'd rather you thought I ought to."

Ruth laughed, and gave another humorously affectionate glance.

"You are delicious, Mother, you are really no end of fun."

"Oh, and you are a little prig!"

"Oh, very well." The girl was piqued.

"I could forgive you anything—" Her mother, reverting to her main theme, added, "Ruth darling," in tenacious endearment. "Anything, if you would only be reasonable about Freddie. Now that is really important."

"Very likely he won't ask me." Ruth was impatient, she wanted to finish unpacking.

"I'm sure you would always *like* Freddie. He's the sort of person one gets used to."

"The bond of union," Ruth declaimed, "is a wonderful thing. Live with almost anyone for a length of time and you get used to him. There is a kind of affection, because he's always there. And that is so comfortable."

"It is quite true."

"I call it disgusting!"

"Well—I really don't feel that I can write that letter to-night."

V

Chrissy was settling to her magazine again, when the waiter reappeared.

"A lady and gentleman to see you, madam."

"Miriam! Freddie! Well—what a surprise!"

"Why—splendid!" cried Ruth.

She ran in from the bedroom exultantly.

"Oh, how glad I am that you have been brave enough to come!" She embraced her aunt. "Let me take off your things. Freddie, you're a brick."

"H'm—yes. Feel a bit of a fool, don't mind telling you." He took off his coat and put it with his hat on a chair.

"What has happened, Miriam?" Christine asked helplessly. "What *can* have happened? Oh—" She put her hand to her forehead. "This is all so very unusual, so very agitating."

"I am very sorry, Christine, on your account—very sorry indeed. I know I haven't the right—"

"You have! You have!" Ruth was exultant still.

"But I couldn't stand it!" Miriam continued rapidly and with emotion. "I couldn't! It was too brutal, too cruel!" Freddie at this point withdrew. "He said the most dreadful things—as if I had been in the wrong! I suppose that horrid girl is beautiful?"

She broke down and turned from them, in tears.

"Come," said Ruth, "sit here. Don't try to talk any more."

"Oh, I must." Miriam took a chair. "I must know. Why should he—? And all because he's been having that affair with the typist girl. For that was why he was angry."

"Oh, men are like that, my dear." Chrissy indifferently pronounced the truism. "She's probably been offish with him, or something like that."

"He—he tried to bully me into telling him how much I knew. But I wouldn't. And he kept on—on and on and on—till my brain could have burst! He abused you, Chrissy—abominably."

"Oh!" Christine stirred indignantly. "You had great provocation, Miriam. I do feel you had great provocation."

"Then luckily—when things were at their worst—Lennox came on business. Lennox—you know, his partner. Well, I didn't know what to do. I couldn't think. I couldn't do anything. I—They were talking a long time in the study. I could hear their voices. I thought of slipping off to the office. I thought I might get a glimpse of the girl when Leonard wasn't there. But it wouldn't have been any good. The place would have been all shut up—and I know Leonard looks younger than I do—oh, dear!"

"Well, dear, maybe." Chrissy was sisterly. "But then *dear* Mr. Sherard is obviously older. And you look very *nice*."

"Oh, but I felt so—I felt— It was horrible. I couldn't—"

The waiter's knock interrupted. He came in with a cloth under his arm, carrying Mrs. Westlake's provisions on a tray. He took a table, laid the cloth and arranged the meal in front of her chair.

"Miriam," Christine broke the silence, "you must take something."

"Oh, no, I'm not hungry at all."

"A glass of Burgundy, at least. It will do you good. Waiter, bring another glass."

"Very good, madam."

He went.

"I really have no appetite myself." Chrissy examined her fork. "But I was feeling a little faint. I thought I had better try to eat something."

"I think you are wise. Ruth, dear, oughtn't you to take some supper, too?"

"Ruth is so wonderfully strong. I often envy her."

Mrs. Westlake had diffidently approached her steak, when Freddie came back, announcing that he had got a room for Mrs. Darrell.

"I've had the luggage sent up," he added.

"Luggage?" Chrissy queried sharply.

"A valise of mine," the young man deprecated. "We called at my rooms in Jermyn Street on the way."

"Your valise? Wasn't that a little indiscreet?"

"Well, there had to be some sort of luggage. Deuced awkward. The valise has no initials or labels or anything of that kind."

Ruth looked gratefully at him. "I think you behaved splendidly."

"Yes, dear boy, didn't he?" Chrissy approvingly put in.

"Deuced awkward. Couldn't be helped, I suppose."

Ruth turned to her aunt. "Freddie came in from his dinner while the other two were talking, I suppose, and—"

"I made him go out again at once, and take me with him—yes. Poor Freddie, he didn't want to, I'm afraid. I quite rushed him into it."

"Work of a moment." Freddie forced a comic air. "Quite took my breath away, give you my word."

The waiter returned with a glass and put it on the table. As he left, Mrs. Westlake poured out two glasses of the Burgundy.

"You really must, dear." She handed the wine to her sister. "I insist."

Miriam sipped, then took a longer draught. Christine drank too; she held out her glass to Freddie.

"Chin-chin!" exclaimed the young man.

"Not good enough for a connoisseur like you, I suppose?" she twitted him.

"Oh, pretty fair, pretty fair. Better than the sort of stuff they usually serve when a woman orders it."

"I only wanted it as *medicine*, you see, Freddie."

"Oh, yes." Freddie was vague. "Tintara—ferruginous—that sort of thing."

He laughed uneasily.

There was a pause, broken by Chrissy, who, with a glance at Miriam, demanded:

"Was Mr. Sherard entertaining tonight, Freddie?"

"Sherard? Much as usual. He's just a bit of a prig, y'know. Bit of a stick, between ourselves."

"Freddie," Miriam addressed him, "please keep a careful account of what I owe you. I had no money, you see. Leonard always keeps the purse." She seemed on the point of breaking down again.

"Miriam, dearest." Christine spoke with tender tact. "Miriam, dearest, have you considered the future at all? Don't think me interfering, but your speaking of money reminded me. Have you any money of your own, dear?"

"None at all. Surely you know that."

"Then what are you to do? Forgive me, dear, for being so frank, but how *can* you leave Leonard?"

"I don't know! I don't know!"

"It seems to me—I hate putting it so baldly, dear, but we must look things in the face—well, it seems to me madness!"

Ruth, intently watching, emotionally stirred by her aunt's agitation, could refrain no longer.

"Oh, it's wrong!" she exclaimed. "It's all wrong! The way things are managed is all wrong!"

"You see," Chrissy pursued her course, "I should love to have you with us, but I really couldn't involve Ruth in any scandal. And you know, dear, you've always said that a woman's first duty is to her husband."

VI

RUTH went into the bedroom in desperation. Chrissy was regarding her sister when the waiter, puzzled but discreet, again appeared.

"A gentleman to see you, madam," he announced.

Sherard followed him, with the air of a man dedicated to a mission high and grave.

"Mrs. Darrell!" he cried. "I thought so."

He advanced with one hand rather awkwardly outstretched. "I thought you would be here. Mrs. Westlake, I have to apologize for this intrusion. I wish particularly to speak with Mrs. Darrell. It is really urgent. Would you be so good as to allow me—?"

"You put me in an extremely difficult position, Mr. Sherard. I really—I have never been in such a position before."

"Mother, please. I beg you." Ruth had come back on Sherard's entrance.

"Mrs. Darrell is my sister—my younger sister—my only sister—"

"Mother!"

"You wish to have this interview with Mr. Sherard, Miriam? Oh, very well. Very well. But it is a great responsibility. I am really reluctant. Freddie, you hear me say that I am really reluctant?"

"Oh, yes, Chrissy, I hear. So was I, by Jove, really reluctant. Deuced awkward—gets more and more awkward, too."

"But I don't see what else I could have—what else I can do. Well."

She got up as reluctantly as possible.

"Thank you," said Sherard seriously. "I am under a great obligation."

"Oh, no." Christine spoke absently, as if thinking of something else. "No, not at all. Not in the least." She turned to go into the bedroom.

"Oh, don't desert me, Chrissy," Freddie protested. "Come along with us."

Christine hesitated, then turned to Ruth.

"Ruth, dear," she said gently, "you go with Freddie. He doesn't want to be deserted."

She turned toward the bedroom again.

"Where are you going, Mother?" Ruth was suspicious.

"You see"—Mrs. Westlake lowered her voice—"you see, we really must consider. You wouldn't like the only aunt you have to elope, would you?"

Ruth gave it up and went with Freddie. Her mother entered the bedroom and shut the door rather markedly behind her.

Sherard advanced towards Mrs. Darrell.

"Miriam," he said in an impressive lowered tone, "he came to my house to-night."

"To you? Why? When did he come?"

"Just before I got home. They told me he had called. He had the insolence to ask if a lady had come to the house this evening."

"You don't mean that you think that he thought I would—that is, we would—what I mean is—"

"Miriam—you can't go back to him! When I think of the things he said! He insulted you; he insulted me. I can hardly control myself when I think of it. And you to be compelled to go back—to live with a man like that!"

"You are speaking of my husband." She looked away from him.

"But, good heavens, think how he has treated you!"

"I know. Well, you see, I have left him." Miriam Darrell paused, then started. "What was that?"

"Oh, nothing. Something in the next room."

"It startled me."

"I've come now to ask you to leave him for good. Let us justify his cursed suspicions. Miriam!" He moved nearer to her. "Miriam, come to me!"

"What is happening in that bedroom?" Mrs. Darrell again showed apprehension. "I can hear a voice—"

"Oh, it's nothing—nothing," Sherard replied impatiently. "A chambermaid probably. Miriam, you cannot refuse this. You shall not."

The woman drew back and made a faint gesture of dissent. She was obviously still preoccupied with what might be going on in the next room.

"But I say you shall not. The time has come to say that now."

Forced from his normal moderation, Sherard became stilted, amateurishly theatrical, sometimes absurdly forensic.

"Come now. To-night. My God, what else is there to do?"

"Why were they talking in that room? There is no sound now."

"Miriam! I love you." She looked at him, and then looked away, motionless, miserable. "You know I love you! You have known it for five years."

"Did I ever let you say it before?"

"Oh, we wore masks!" Sherard's rhetoric quickened. "The usual masks. We were dumb. I was honourable. Oh, yes honourable! And you—"

"Don't speak so loud."

"You were all that the world could ask a wife to be. A wife! I hate the word! It must have been slavery for you all these years—slavery and degradation! And of the worst kind."

"I can't feel like that. All that you say seems somehow unreal—"

"But don't you see—surely you must—what a tragedy it all is?"

"Yes." She deliberated. "If I had—if I had the spirit!"

"Oh, I can see. This has broken you. Yes, I can understand that. These last years have been enough to break any woman's spirit. But"—he plunged eagerly—"you will recover, you will revive—with me. I shall understand. Miriam, I give you my word of honour; you can trust me. I will press nothing. Don't I feel just as you do, that the usual kind of—er—lovemaking—passion—between us at this time would be the wrong thing altogether? Don't be afraid that I shall offend and shock you with—er—that kind of thing. I shall make no demands. It will be enough for me that I have taken you away from him"—his voice deepened—"out of hell."

She looked at him with patient bewilderment.

"There—again—" She spoke with difficulty. "When you say that—I can't describe it, but it seems to mean nothing. I can't understand, I can't answer. I wish I could—Ralph. I do wish that. But you seem all the while to be speaking to someone who is quite different from me—another person altogether. I don't dislike Leonard."

"But you want to leave him, surely? You have left him. You said just now that you had left him."

"Yes. I left him because I was afraid—because I was— Oh, I was very much upset, of course, or I would never have done it."

"You don't mean to say that you regret—?"

"I suppose I am calmer now. I have had time to think."

"That is all I ask: that you should think things over." Sherard dropped his impatient tone. "I am sorry I have been so uncontrolled. No doubt you thought I was going in for stupid heroics. You know I'm not usually emotional. But after what had happened—well, we won't talk of that. Heaven knows I want to forget it—I want you to forget it. Miriam, I want us to forget it together!"

"If we could—"

"But you would. Give yourself time. Everything would be changed for you—gradually—gradually—"

"I have been married eight years. He is my husband. To take up a different life—in a different house—to begin it all over again. I should feel as though I had two husbands. I won-

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der if I could. And besides, then he would go off with that girl—"

"You have really no feeling for me then?" Sherard was piqued. "I thought that you—"

"Yes, yes, I have."

"But then, surely—why, it is a question of common sense!"

"I know. It seems to be. But if you only knew how little I seem to have left to give!"

"You can't love *him*, Miriam!"

"Well— But this would be dragging me up—by the roots!"

They were both forgetting to speak in undertones now.

"Miriam!" Sherard took her hands, and she half turned from him. "Miriam, I implore you, don't be afraid! Be bold now, have courage for this moment—and you will never need to be afraid any more!"

"Ah, yes." She looked steadily at him. "Ralph—perhaps—but yet it seems impossible!"

"Of course it is impossible."

Christine Westlake addressed them from behind. They turned and stared at her.

"I'm sure you must see, Mr. Sherard, that Miriam is perfectly right."

"Good Lord! The things you women—"

"Dear Mr. Sherard"—Christine went to him—"dear Mr. Sherard, please don't be angry."

"So you *have* been eavesdropping, Chrissy!"

"Of course I've been listening." Chrissy glanced nonchalantly at her sister; then, turning to Sherard, she spoke ingratiatingly:

"Of course I have. You must see, dear Mr. Sherard, that this is a family affair."

She brushed the dust from her knees, smiling.

"Well, upon my soul—" Sherard controlled himself. "But no," he added emphatically, "it is an individual affair!"

"I couldn't help feeling, you see, that it would really do no good your going on talking. It could only be painful to Miriam." Mrs. Darrell turned hopelessly. "Poor Miriam—so distressed, so overwrought. I couldn't let her be carried away—my only sister—and you are so persuasive, dear Mr. Sherard, you have such a gift. It wouldn't be fair to Miriam in her present state—oh, I know she would be so sorry afterwards—"

"She's not a child!"

"Oh, there is so much to consider! My daughter Ruth—I have only her—my only child. You are so fair-minded and reasonable, I am sure you will understand. A mother—oh, Mr. Sherard! I beg you to consider my position. You see how difficult—"

"My dear lady, I quite understand, but—"

"Oh, I must protect my child from scandal!"

"Mrs. Westlake—" Sherard professionally cleared his throat. "Do consider Miriam's position. Do you imagine that anything can be worse for her than the present?"

"What nonsense! She is used to it. You heard her say yourself that she was used to it. We women are not like you. We can't be torn up by the roots."

"Christine—please don't!"

"Miriam would be perfectly unhappy with you. Of course if you had married her first that would have been quite different. I'm not saying, dear Mr. Sherard, that you wouldn't make an admirable husband. I'm sure you would. But Miriam has been married to someone else for eight years. Dear Miriam"—Chrissy looked caressingly at her—"I feel quite sure you will take the right view—the wisest course."

"Yes, I couldn't—I knew I couldn't."

Sherard went over to Miriam as she spoke.

"Miriam, I entreat you, don't listen to your sister. Good God, why should our lives be taken from us like this?" He spoke as though in a peroration. "I know that your only happiness, your only peace of mind, your only honour, are with me and not with the man who has been your husband." He took her

hand, and Mrs. Darrell did not take it away. She sat more erectly and looked straight before her. Christine suavely intervened.

"Of course, Mr. Sherard," she said, "of course I quite see that it is very splendid of you, and all that, not to consider yourself at all."

"What do you mean?"

"Why, your reputation, your future, my dear man. You're in Parliament; you're sure to be a K.C. very soon. You may be in the Cabinet in a year or two. We all know you're quite wonderful." She came to him and put her hand on his arm. "You've everything before you, as things are now. You're a rising man. And it really is rather noble of you to be willing to give it all up."

"Oh, no—no." Sherard unconsciously released Miriam's hand. "You exaggerate. I'm strong enough to—er—stand scandal—to a certain extent. And public sympathy will be with me, I'm quite confident—"

"I don't think you can be, really. How about Sir Henry Brace? One of the ablest men in the Party, wasn't he? How about his career?"

Sherard did not answer for a moment. He walked up and down.

"Brace's affair," he said at length, "was quite different. An even he kept his seat."

"But why did he never get into the Cabinet? Everybody knows that dozens of much less capable men were promoted over his head. No, my dear Mr. Sherard—my dear Miriam—it won't do, it won't work. Not for you, at any rate."

They were silent. Mrs. Westlake scrutinized the barrister with narrowed eyes. Mrs. Darrell had apparently lost all interest. She sat very still, looking at the floor. Sherard stood in the middle of the room, trying to disguise the fact that he was baffled and chilled. Finally he squared his shoulders and assumed a determined air.

"For my part," he said, "I am willing to take the risk."

"Ah, but why?" Christine had the casual tone that accompanies assured success. "It isn't worth it."

"*My* wife isn't worth it!"

The sudden violence of this outburst startled them. Sherard actually, and ridiculously, jumped.

The waiter who had shown in Leonard Darrell looked consciously imperturbable. Mrs. Westlake rose and spoke at once.

"Ah, Leonard!" She went to him. "I am so glad you have come!"

"Mother!" Ruth had followed the visitor. "You don't play the game!"

"Ruth, dear—your uncle—"

The girl glared at Darrell, she went to an end of the room away from them.

"The poor child is a little preoccupied," Chrissy explained.

"Mr. Sherard," she went on indifferently, "I meant to tell you—the time was getting on—that Leonard would be here so very shortly. Miriam, darling, don't you think—wouldn't it be wiser—? You see, I *had* to send for him, Mr. Sherard."

"You sent for him—you—" Sherard gurgled with indignation.

"Well, why not? Didn't I send for *you?*"

"There, you see!" Miriam turned to Sherard. "I *was* right about that room. I knew Christine— She was telephoning—"

"Oh, yes, there's no doubt, Miriam, your hearing is excellent. *I*, of course, was somewhat preoccupied. Well, we've cleared up what happened in 'that room.'" Sherard was heavily ironic.

"In a few minutes, dear—if you want to speak to me." Mrs. Westlake placidly addressed her daughter. "Mr. Sherard is just going."

"Oh, very well. Very well." Sherard tided over the moment of Ruth's exit. "You're the one"—he turned with strained facetiousness to Christine—"you're the one who ought to be the barrister."

Mrs. Darrell looked dully from Sherard to her sister. "I should have known what you would do. You *would* be against me."

Chrissy gave a shocked start.

"My dear!" she exclaimed, looking hurt. "You see, Mr. Sherard—you see, Leonard—she is quite overwrought. We mustn't fancy things, must we?—Quite unable to see things as they are. Just as I said."

"You'll take care of her, won't you?" Sherard, still elaborately ignoring the uninjured husband, left upon a note of tender solicitude. Things were getting entirely too much for him.

The sullen silence of Darrell had been marked. "Miriam here—" He spoke at last. "H'm—I see—"

"So tired, dear Leonard. Quite exhausted." Chrissy's sympathy embraced them both.

"I have come to take her home."

"Yes, yes—quite natural. I quite understand. But really I don't think, Leonard, that she's up to going to-night. It is so very late. Now do let me persuade you, for this once. You know she is quite safe with me."

"I can't to-night. Oh, no, I can't, I can't!"

"What a relief! That that silly man has gone!" Christine lightly controlled the hysterical impulse of her younger sister.

"You can trust me," she went on. "You will see that everything will be quite all right." She looked at her watch. "It is absurdly late. Ruth, poor child, ought to have been in bed long ago. Oh, good-evening, Miss Atkins. *This* is 'Mill,' dear. You said you wanted so much to meet her."

VII

Chrissy rose and led forward a girl who had been standing for the last few moments unnoticed just outside the door.

Her naïve, flowerlike face glowed now with the pretty colour of embarrassment. "I'm afraid Mrs. Darrell doesn't really want to meet a silly girl like me."

The gaucheries of youth and inexperience stained the pretty effect of her simplicity. Her class was obvious. You find them, these delicate and sleek little water-rats—so pretty, so clinging, so amorous—about the wharves of Liverpool, or indeed of any port town. Chaste and promiscuous, they have an ineradicable appeal to a certain type of moral sensualist. He wants them to want him—and he is grateful that they save him the trouble of taking them. The guilty attraction of Leonard for this little immoralist was evident. It was quaint and pretty to see the way she at once glowed—and restrained him.

"There's Burgundy here," Chrissy suggested; and the four uncomfortably sipped.

"It's been warm, hasn't it?" Mill timidly ventured.

Miriam, under her dark lashes, studied the girl.

Darrell, in a miserable and apprehensive minority, avoided the eyes of each of the three women. "Well, Christine—don't know what your game is—did as you told me—always up to something—"

"Why, *Leonard*—you make me sound like a conspirator. Like one of those dreadful anarchist people with bombs. Of course I wanted Miriam to see this sweet little assistant of yours. Such a faithful little wife and such a faithful little worker ought to know each other—especially as we all know what a dear, affectionate, harmless old thing you are!"

"Oh, come now, I wouldn't go so far as that. Not harmless—"

"Of course, Leonard," Chrissy's tone was a marvel of implications, "of course I don't mean harmless to the peace of mind of us poor women—do I, Miss Atkins? But then we all know your beautiful chivalric nature. You couldn't, you know, you simply *couldn't*."

"Oh, no doubt." Darrell avoided looking at his sister-in-law. "I think—" He looked meaningly at Mill. "Miss Atkins lives some way out—er—"

"Oh, but you won't leave us yet, Miss Atkins, will you—so soon?"

"No, *I* don't want her to go, either," said Miriam eagerly.

"You see!" Chrissy was triumphant.

"Bedroom through that door?" asked Darrell casually. "Ah, yes. You've a smut on your nose, Mill."

"Oh, my word, have I?" The girl was agitated.

"Yes." Darrell opened the bedroom door. "There's water in here."

The girl went hurriedly in, and Miriam followed her. "I'll show you where things are."

"Oh, thank you, very kind, I'm sure."

"Well," said Chrissy, as the door closed. "*Really*—"

She was a bit baffled for once. She laughed. "Well, it doesn't matter. Mill and Miriam will have a nice long talk together—"

"I think Miriam ought to come back at once, though."

"Oh, of course you have a perfect *right* to take her now. I don't mean to say for a moment that you haven't the *right*. But don't you think it would be *wiser* not to insist? Ruth and I could so easily bring her back to-morrow.

"What!" Miriam, returning, exclaimed.

"You and Ruth!" ejaculated Darrell, amazed.

Christine, unmoved, confident, surveyed him.

"Ruth and I," she reasonably explained, "are always your friends, of course. Now come, Leonard, haven't I shown that I'm your friend?"

She touched Darrell's arm and looked appealing. "Really, I don't know how Miriam would get on without me to-night."

"Very well. To-morrow." The man gave in. "As soon as you can."

"Ah!" Chrissy sighed and looked flatteringly at him. "How splendid of you! How wonderfully you manage!"

"Good-night." Darrell buttoned his overcoat. "And — er — I suppose I must thank you. I'm afraid I was— well, it can't be helped. I shall see you all again to-morrow, I suppose—"

"Good-night, Leonard." Christine smiled graciously and shook hands.

VIII

When Ruth came back she found her mother comfortably relaxed in an armchair, turning the pages of her magazine.

"Well? I hope you've been fixing it up with Freddie?"

"Mother, how can you? Tell me what has happened about Aunt Miriam?"

"Poor Aunt Miriam! She is in our room, discussing stenography with 'Mill.'" Chrissy made a slight grimace. "So we must talk low."

"And Mr. Sherard has gone. I didn't think he would do that."

Mrs. Westlake glanced at her daughter indifferently. "What else do you think she could have done?" she inquired.

"Oh, Mother! You must know she would be far happier with him! But he'll come back. I know he'll come back."

"My dear child, of course he'll come back. But I'm not fond of uncomfortable family scandals, and Aunt Miriam is quite of my mind—quite."

"Oh, I think you are abominably selfish!"

"Selfish?" Christine spoke wearily and patiently. "Selfish? You are very ungrateful, Ruth, I must say. I am only anxious for *you*. Naturally, I don't want you to be dragged into any unpleasant affair. It is my duty to protect you, Ruth."

"Yes, I know. This is how all these horrible things are kept going."

"I'm sure a divorce would be horrible enough for all of us, Aunt Miriam included." Christine yawned. "What's become of Freddie?" she added.

"Oh, Freddie? He went off to the smoking-room or somewhere. I expect he's asleep by now in one of those big armchairs."

"Poor Freddie! It must have been

very trying for him—you do like him, Ruth, don't you?"

"He bores me very much sometimes. I really can't stand that Sir Galahad pose of his. So many young men are like that with girls, especially the sort of young men who cultivate married women and the *demi-monde*—"

"Ruth, please don't. I'm tired enough already."

"Oh," Ruth was in no mood to let her mother off, "I know you've been talking to Freddie about your innocent little daughter. It may be good policy, but it makes it very dull for **me.**"

"We must really get to bed. Freddie had better go to Jermyn Street, I suppose. I'm extremely tired. I seem to have done so much."

"You have, Mother. Oh, there's no doubt of it, you're wonderful, but your methods are peculiar."

"My methods!" Christine went to the bedroom door. "My methods! What do you mean?"

IX

THE next afternoon, Ruth, back at her aunt's house, was reading aloud to her mother.

"'Luke Ffolliott,'" read Ruth, "'was certainly one of the darlings of the gods. Even his enemies, had he had any, could hardly have denied that. With his clear-cut, delicately featured, clean-shaven face—'"

"Ah!" Chrissy spoke in a high-pitched, weary voice. "Ah, Ruth, dear, do stop—please. I declare I would give all the women ten votes apiece if they'd only promise never to write any more novels. These clean-shaven, clear-cut heroes! Fancy a world of Charlie Lensters!"

"A very nice world! But I warned you that this book of Freddie's would be sure to be stupid."

"What! He didn't write it himself, did he? I thought it must be a woman."

Ruth laughed. "Oh, mummie, you are funny!" She instinctively adopted a "little girl air." "Fancy poor dear Freddie writing a book."

"You *will* be good and reasonable, won't you, dear?" Christine stroked her daughter's slender fingers.

Ruth looked ironically up at her. "My own patient and devoted mother!"

"If I wasn't fond of you, dear, I shouldn't mind what you did. You aren't quite fair, Babykins." She caressed her.

"H'm." Ruth looked away. "Everything all right now with Miriam and Leonard? Bust-up quite all over, eh?"

"Oh, yes. I did what I could. Leonard behaved pretty well in the end. He even apologized to Sherard—in a sort of way." She spoke absently, continuing to caress the girl, who only half listened to what she was saying. Suddenly she kissed her.

"Oh," she went on, "don't think I don't understand. Of course I see how utterly charming Charlie Lenster is. I —I only pretend I don't—but any woman— Only you're so pretty and sweet, my dear, and meant for a beautiful life. It would simply mean spoiling your future to marry a poor man. It would be quite a different matter if it were I—"

"I don't see why."

"For the simple reason that I could afford him and you can't. Your dear father's income—quite sufficient—"

Chrissy broke off with just a *soupçon* of confusion.

"Freddie's a delightful boy," she went on hurriedly, "and he has enough money."

"But, Mother"—the girl spoke slowly, feeling herself upon unknown and insecure ground—"it doesn't seem 'a beautiful life' to me. I seem to want something quite different. With Freddie—I am gay—and I don't dislike him. There is even something that I don't want to know in myself that rather wants to marry him. I know he *is* attractive to almost *any* woman. But with Charlie—Mother—I can't tell you what it is. It—it seems to make me *good*—that doesn't explain it quite. I

seem to stretch my soul—and untie its bonds—and I want to feel that. I want Charlie, Mother—"

"My little dreamer—" Chrissy's tone broke a little.

For a moment her triviality and the girl's febrile youth seemed caught away, and there passed between them that communion known only between mothers and daughters, never between mothers and sons.

They were both silent when Miriam came in a few minutes later, bringing her husband, who was just back from the office. Freddie and Charlie Lenster were with him. During the greetings the door opened again, admitting Sherard and Millicent Atkins in incongruous conjunction.

"Mother—" Ruth, as usual, was the first to grasp the full significance of this grouping. "Mother, what *are* you up to now?"

"My *dear* child! Your expressions! I'm not 'up to' anything. But have you spoken to Miss Atkins? Miriam, my dear, wasn't it kind of Miss Atkins to come in just to see how you were to-day? You two talked so late last night."

"But I can't stay," the girl stammered. "I must get back. The office—"

"Dear child—" Chrissy soothed her. "Leonard, you must look after her. You mustn't let her overwork. And—Mr. Sherard—don't you think our Miriam is looking more charming than ever you saw her? Leonard was saying this morning how well she looked. Life has been so full these last two days. We'd got into a rut, I think; but now here we are—Leonard and his 'Mill,' and dear Mr. Sherard and his Miriam—the best of four good friends with not a finger to point at them. Now who's going to crown me with the waste-paper-basket?"

There was a little gust of laughter as Chrissy swept to the end of her audacious homily. Sherard alone remained grave. He was puzzled and somewhat disturbed.

"I think you're splendid, Chrissy! Isn't she, Darrell?" Freddie gave an admiring glance.

"And now Ruth, my little daughter, wouldn't this be a good moment to announce your engagement to—"

"To Freddie—! Oh, Mother, how *could* you?"

Sherard coughed, highly embarrassed. Christine sighed deeply, let her blue eyes rest pathetically upon Freddie and Darrell, then started, with a catch of her breath.

"Oh, Leonard," she said tearfully, "I feel so helpless!" She seemed about to cry.

"Very trying, my dear, very trying." Darrell was responsive at once. "I'm afraid it's an awful strain for you."

Both he and Freddie were taken up with Christine, concerned for her. Miriam remained seated, looking at them; while Sherard, out of sheer good manners, attempted an animated discussion about golf with Lenster, who paid absolutely no attention.

"Poor dear Chrissy," Freddie comforted her. "Poor old girl. I'm beastly sorry. You always seem to be getting let in for it."

Chrissy turned to Darrell, with arms outstretched in pathetic appeal.

"Leonard," she said, "don't you see—?"

"I don't believe she cares for him—"

"Oh, yes, she does. She cares quite enough."

"Oh, I'm not interfering." Darrell was uncomfortable. "Don't think for a moment, of course, that—"

"This is a cruel thing!" Miriam made a direct attack.

Christine looked indignantly at her.

"How can you?" she protested. "You surely must see—"

Miriam burst into tears.

Freddie, very uncomfortable, approached Sherard. "Wouldn't be a bad idea, perhaps, if we just trotted off to the smoking-room for a bit? Or might have a game of billiards, eh?"

"Here, confound you!" Darrell angrily attacked Freddie. "Confound you, can't you see you're upsetting my wife?"

He and Christine hurried to Miriam.

"I must go and see—" Ruth opened the door.

"No, no, dear child. You will see, it will be all right. Leonard, I think you ought to take Miriam and look after her. There, dear." Christine handed Miriam over to her husband, who took his wife's arm with an air of benevolent proprietorship. "Be very kind and nice, Leonard dear. Now, darling," she said to Miriam, "you'll soon be yourself again."

"Oh, yes, I—"

"There, then, that's all right!"

"Wonderful woman, Darrell," remarked Freddie. "'Pon my soul, she's a wonderful woman."

Christine smiled at him as though she bore all the burden of the situation and maintained brightness by an effort; but there was no less coquetry than usual in her smile. Freddie looked as if he thought her more wonderful than ever.

"My nice old Freddie-boy!" she answered his expression. "You'll try and cheer Ruth up, won't you?"

Ruth looked hard at her mother and Freddie.

"Why encourage us, Mother?" she said with light defiance. "Freddie—you've just heard. We've all heard. Don't you like the trap, Freddie?"

She stood away from him, and made a gesture of display. "I'm the bait."

"Ruth, Ruth, how can you be so outrageous?"

"Oh, Freddie won't mind. If he does, I won't marry him. Will you be a nice bait, too, Freddie dear?"

She went up to him and played with his watch-chain. Her hair brushed his pink cheeks.

"Well—" he stammered, "this is—this is—"

"Not sudden? Oh, Freddie, dear little Freddie, not *sudden?* Don't say that."

Her fingers touched his. She laughed charmingly.

"Oh, hang it all," Freddie was obviously embarrassed. "Hang it all, I—"

She laughed again, and then he kissed her. "You *are* a darling, isn't she, Chrissy?"

"How well we know how to deal with them, don't we, Mother dear?"

Charlie Lenster turned to Ruth. He had been standing silent, with absorbed interest.

"Ruth, tell me." He spoke quietly. "*Do* you love me? Do you—?"

Ruth turned to him, with an uncertain little laugh, and an indeterminate, almost childlike gesture of appeal. Her lips quivered babyishly.

"I mustn't think of that," she said at last. "In our set we don't. It's a word they don't understand—"

"But I do!"

It was "Mill" who, forgotten by them all, came forward at this. "I'm not one of your 'set'—but I'm young like you are, and I know what love means, and it don't go according to law nor rules. And if you'll excuse me for advising, Miss Westlake, I say stick to your fellow."

The two girls stood isolated for a moment, their youth and sex antagonizing everything else in the room.

"Charlie is my 'fellow,' of course you know that." Ruth's tone was more normal now.

"Then stick to him and don't mind what the rest say to you."

Christine came to them with outstretched arms. She seized a hand of Ruth, a hand of Lenster.

"My dear *children!*" She was radiant. "Let me introduce you—dear people—to my future son-in-law—Sir Charles Lenster-Kaye, *attaché* to the Embassy in Rome—son of my dearest friend. Come and kiss your happy, happy mother, my little girl—"

"Mother—Charlie—" Ruth stopped and took stock of the fishlike gaze of astonishment upon the faces about her. Then she fled to the door.

"Charlie!" she called back. "I don't care who you are, but you come out here and get engaged to me properly."

At the door, with Lenster's arm over her shoulder, she stopped. "Mother—I think for once in your life you've just *got* to explain."

Chrissy, who was now standing by Freddie, looked up at him.

"I'll explain," she answered. "But first just let me see. Leonard and 'Mill' —Miriam and Mr. Sherard—Ruth and Charlie Lenster—and you and I. And please shut the door, Ruth, on account of the servants."

Chrissy was at her gayest. "It's quite simple, really. The salt of life in youth is rebellion and romance. I wanted you to have the full flavour, Ruthy; so I worked on your contraries to make you marry the man I wanted for you—and as to the deception, that's the story you've been reading all your life. 'The beautiful but despised youngest son' always turns out to be the prince—six times monthly in any of the magazines. I thought you would be so pleased to live it. As for the rest—it's what we are all hungry for—rebellion and romance. We were getting so dull. Domesticity has always the flavour of the apple—Paradise seemed so long forgotten. We were longing for freedom and innocence—and I leaped at the chance that 'Mill's' little pink note gave me. I couldn't stand it, the smooth way our souls seemed to be gliding by each other like grey cats in the twilight—"

"You *are* mad, Mother! And what about Freddie?"

"Oh—Freddie—Well, really, Ruth, your poor old mother must be allowed her own little bit of romance. Freddie and I have been married just a week."

Even Chrissy was taken aback by the consternation on the faces of the group.

Darrell emitted a groan of sheer misery.

"I wish you wouldn't go so fast, Chrissy," he pleaded. "A chap's mind isn't equal to it."

"Well, at least it makes sense to *you*, Freddie, doesn't it?" Ruth pointed her remark.

"Dear, dear people, forgive me—but truly you all look enlivened—you do. You are younger and gayer—you are all happy and innocent. I meant it for the best, and if I've been clumsy or thoughtless or mischievous you must put it down to its being just Chrissy's way."

"*My* Chrissy's way," said Freddie, and, catching her shoulders, he spun her lightly round to kiss the back of her neck.

SCHERZO

By George Rowley

COLUMBINE crumples a rose leaf
And seems dismayed to me;
And Pierrot's grief, in my belief,
Is less than it should be. . . .

Harlequin knows no necromance
And nothing but the moon
Makes a fantasy of his dance
And posing Pantaloon.

However . . . none who watch disclose
Amazement at it all;
And wisdom goes in dominoes
To queer dear carnival. . . .

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

By L. de Salis Schultz

WHY Iris Colby had divorced her husband was a mystery to all her friends.

We were very much surprised, at least we thought we were. But what was really bothering us was just *what* it was that caused Iris finally to make the decision. There must have been some tremendous reason.

Everybody knew that Jack Colby, during the last half-dozen years, had given Iris more reasons for leaving him than for living with him. Jack is, to say the least, striking-looking and uncomfortably fascinating — which no doubt helped him in his occupation of being a sedulous umpire of feminine beauty. However, his foibles in this direction had never appeared to trouble Iris. So when Iris 'phoned, asking me to come to tea, I accepted with gusto. I knew I would hear something. Tea has loosened the tongues of more women than ever cocktails have of men. After we had chatted about everything but that which was uppermost in our minds Iris suddenly put down her cup and saucer, and said:

"I know you are longing to hear why I left Jack. Everybody is wondering, so you may tell them the truth. Jack and I were very happy. Of course, I knew he had his little love affairs, but I am not of a jealous temperament, and I am good-looking enough to be able to admire other women, without being insincere. Besides Jack always picked out women as charming as myself, and more beautiful. But my happiness came to an end the day I found Jack making love to a plain-looking woman who wore cotton stockings and talked about having 'a little lunch' after the theatre. That was the supreme insult."

And looking at Iris, I realized it was.

A PREACHER tells the members of his church all about God, but the members of his church tell the preacher all about the members of his church.

IF you squeeze the hand of a woman who has a history, she will wonder how much you know.

A MAN makes friends, but a woman makes only acquaintances and lovers

THE TRIANGLE

By Louise de Forest Shelton

I

IT was only when her hair had grown white and she wore soft grey gowns and the family lace that she was called "the Saint." At seventeen Ellen Mainard was a butterfly—at thirty she was yet more alluring; at forty she was still refusing to marry men—instinctively aristocratic, exquisite and charming.

It was twenty years since she had been forty . . . incredible, it seemed to her, but none the less it was true. The family lace and grey gowns were undeniably becoming; there was no need to defy the years, because she knew that she was charming in spite of them. Yet with all Ellen's graciousness of form and bearing there was something almost too perfect, too passive—as though she had stood still in the midst of life, letting it touch her, looking out at it with more or less amusement and a great deal of sympathy, yet without herself being part of it. The mantle of sainthood fitted; she was still lovely to look at—not ardently young, like so many American women, but exquisitely perfect, at any age.

She was an immense influence in the small community where she had spent her life, perhaps because of an impression—a permeating sense that hovered about her—of having overcome a threatening past. There were vague intimations among the young people of a love-affair, *years and years ago*, with a man who was not "received"—reinforced by the undeniable fact that she had not married; and the Saint herself was romantically reticent—therefore unfailingly fascinating to the young. The "Mainard Mansion" had been sold after her father's death—it was too large for Ellen to live in alone—but the new people had never been able to give it a meaning or a name. In the minds of the community it was still their *pièce de résistance* against prospering nobodies—still by divine right "Mainard's," giving, as it always had, an air of distinction to the little New England town.

Ellen was standing at the window of the little house where she now lived alone, watching for the postman, who did, after all, bring an unexpected letter. Amusement crept into her eyes as she looked at the envelope. In the upper left-hand corner, enclosed in an extremely spreading triangle, was inscribed in very scraggy printing "THE TRIANGLE CLUB." Lucy! of course. How many years since she had seen that insignia in the corner of an envelope!

She held the letter in her hands a moment, reminder of those incredibly distant schooldays . . . of Lucy—and Rita. The Triangle Club! They had had an absurd, solemn rite of joining hands in a triangle and "passing the kiss"; as Ellen stood there in the window looking back through the years she could see them doing it—herself, fair, and a bit too plump, her shyness covered a little by an innate sense of dignity, or shattered entirely by a bubbling, irrepressible spirit of fun; little Lucy, and Rita—three girls in all the ardent, romantic anticipation of youth, telling each other their dreams and desires. She looked back at that young Ellen as she might have looked at her

own daughter—understandingly, tenderly, but from afar. It seemed indeed a far cry back to that lighthearted girl who had shared all her secrets with Lucy and Rita in the thrilling intimacy of the Triangle—mystic symbol of unending loyalty and love. . . .

If little Lucy was like a sturdy field-daisy, Rita had been like a crimson poppy—dark and delicate, with that sweet, mocking mouth . . . eyes that would grow sombre suddenly—hands that touched the old grand piano at school with divine intuition—Rita was a flame that had flared into the very face of heaven, behind the back of an outraged world. Then she had disappeared, having first defied society's most inviolable convention. Lucy had married—inevitably. She had sent Ellen photographs of all her children and had written her happy letters as the years drifted along—letters full of small homely interests; the affairs of her neighbours, some convalescent girl she was helping, the newest baby, the College Club of which she was President, Tom's cautious business adventures—Lucy was a dear.

She had always been the one that gave the Triangle the comforting sense of being built upon a rock. To Ellen, thinking back through the years, Lucy's nature seemed a reservoir into which she and Rita had poured the sparkling waters from the heights. Lucy had received these rainbow-wreathed cascades unperturbed, with a deep placidity that gave, even then, a maternal tenderness to her affection. Even in the dreamful days of adolescence Lucy had seemed serenely untroubled by any "divine discontent." Though now a widow, her life overflowed with satisfaction—the children had grown up valiantly through measles and scarlet-fever and whooping-cough; now that they were scattered, Lucy had come back from the middle west and settled in Yonkers.

But Rita—Ellen knew nothing definite of Rita. What could have driven the Triangle Club into the foreground?

It was growing dark. With a movement of her hand she pressed a button, sending a soft flood of light over her own stateliness, then, mildly curious, opened the letter.

Lucy's sentiments were bubbling over, as of old. *Couldn't* they get together? Rita, she heard, had come back. . . .

Ellen's heart beat a shade slower. Rita! Not till that moment of knowing her nearness had she realized how she had wanted Rita all these years. . . .

Lucy had already written Rita—they were to come, if possible, this Friday, for a week-end "reunion." Lucy reminded her that the Triangle were all *exactly* the same age (not to be mentioned, of course!); they would go Dumas one better—this was "Forty Years After"! Ellen thought whimsically how often the salt of the earth lacked savour; and yet, how fond she was of Lucy! It was pleasant to have an occasional friend that one could always take for granted—there were so many clever people. It was becoming almost original to be common-place—unique, at least! Ellen smiled. . . . Would Rita go, she wondered.

At dinner-time there was a telegram. She leaned forward, nearer the candle-light, to read it. Her face, full of delicacy and sweetness, was like a lovely miniature in the softly-shed light. The lines were very fine, and gentle, and exquisite—a face that seemed, somehow, *idealized*. She tore the yellow envelope:

"Do manage it. I'm going. Will meet you as per Lucy's schedule on the train Friday."

II

There was something vital and vivid even in a typed telegram of Rita's—and it was—Ellen realized it with a quick pang—literally a life-time since they had met! Would she have grown *old?* Impossible to imagine—Rita was fascination incarnate—would always be. The years might put more sombreness into her beautiful eyes, but could they quench that quick fire that had leaped

up like sudden flame in their darkness, kindled by that ardent spirit that had seemed to give her wings? Wings with which she had flown in the face of virtue! Had she suffered—*regretted?* Ellen wondered. . . .

The man had had a wife—an undeniably inadequate wife—who had refused to divorce him. There were dramatic scenes, which made no impression whatever upon Madame's stubbornness, and then—a blank. Rita and he were gone. Ellen remembered vividly her own startled feelings at the time. Rita had written occasionally, usually from Italy. He was a sculptor—even the incomparable Duse had sat to him, and Tommaso Salvini had said that the hands alone could make one weep. How like Rita to have found her way into the artistic heart of life! Duse and Salvini—Rome and Rapallo . . . yes, the background was right, Ellen felt, inevitably right. Could it be possible that in spite of it Rita was indubitably wrong?—

She thought of her own tepid New England years, a summer or two on the continent, a winter in London—and herself, moving graciously among these things—herself harmoniously a part of them. . . . What if—her heart beat quicker—what if she had done as Rita had done—? Hazbrook would have been without its Saint. Those adoring young people would have had to seek council of their own hearts. When she tried to think of herself stepping out of all this it was as though her thoughts went over the edge of the world, whirling among strange stars and fiery planets—sinking through bottomless ether, having no wings with which to rise. . . . Strange, that love had been offered to both her and Rita, and marriage denied; at least it had seemed to Ellen denied. Unconsciously she trusted entirely to her intuition; never her imagination; and intuition walks in delicious intimacy, but its feet never leave the earth.

He had been a man hopelessly not of her own class, indifferently educated—an expert engineer, doing some important work for her father. Horace Mainard liked him—as an employé, of course—and asked him often to the house. Perhaps if Ellen's exquisite mother had been living she might have had the skill to divert the catastrophe. Her father never even suspected it. On stormy evenings the three would play dominoes together. It was his hands that had attracted her first—such skilful hands. She would sit there waiting for them to reach out over the little table in the lamp-light—big hands that touched things delicately. They seemed to her so perfectly expressive of himself. Horace Mainard's daughter, mistress of his house, sitting there in the dignity and isolation of all that separated her from this man, grew to know, and to understand, and to love those hands. They spoke to her as no words of his could have spoken, made clear to her many meanings—things about him that no intimacy could have revealed more truly. They showed no breeding; their delicacy was directed, controlled—a personal characteristic rather than an inherited grace. It was his mind that had made their motions and given them meaning; they were just ordinary hands, but drilled and disciplined to express his thought. And his thoughts were fine and clear and definite.

His skill as a draughtsman began to be fascinating to her. He used all that difficult technical knowledge with such sureness. She felt an immense respect for anyone who could master a supremely difficult thing so completely. Night after night she would listen and watch as they spread out diagrams and discussed details—her father, aristocratic—superb, in his simple dignity—and the younger man, so different—yet sure of himself, in a modest way that was immensely attractive. His grey eyes had that gleaming quality of sureness, too—as if they knew a great deal about you, but would never presume upon that knowledge. It was because of this that she felt that she could trust him to understand things that could hardly be discussed, and her friendship

had been based on this perilous foundation.

Then the cool spring evenings came, with a slim little early moon, and he and Ellen would walk out alone. And one mood would wrap them both, like a mantle—soft and dark and shining—in which their very thoughts seemed illumined—discernible—as they talked of many things. But they never talked of marriage. Impossible that Ellen Mainard should marry this man. There was a social obligation about marriage—not a superficial one, but something deeper, which Ellen felt—traditions, distinctions—a long line of stately ancestors, to whom she was responsible. There were countless things that she unconsciously took for granted, that did not, for him, exist. . . . The whole fabric of her existence was foreign to him—they had been born into different worlds, into an entirely different set of ideas and interests.

It was impossible for Ellen to picture him as her husband; and yet—there it was, that meeting of their spirits! If she found him impossible as a husband, he was a perfect lover. . . . Love is so much less a material thing than marriage—passion may defy all things, but marriage may not. Ellen married to this man would be one of life's fatal mistakes; no amount of passion could make him adequate as a husband. Nor would she subject him to its inevitable mortifications—she cared for him too much, she knew the world and its ways too well. And—so intuitively did they understand each other in all matters of feeling, she knew that he comprehended all this, without the quite impossible explanations.

She could never allow her father's grandchild to be the son of one utterly alien, as this man was alien; nor could she, as her father's daughter, relinquish all that she had been born to. She had felt so sure of it then, in her passionate youthfulness! And so had made her renunciation. In her self-immolation it had not occurred to her that there might lurk temptations behind it. Her sense of personal dignity had, until then, obscured from her the knowledge that with all else that she had inherited was a capacity for loving beyond even her own imagination. It had been a swift and vivid little scene that had revealed it.

She had been with him, walking in the woods one wild spring Sunday. They were hunting for that first arbutus . . . finding little unexpected signs of spring everywhere—under the rusty leaves, along the edges of the streams, in the shallow rippling rush of water. They had not noticed that the sun was gone—they were only aware that the sweet warm odour of the earth seemed to grow stronger, the woods more still and intimate—they thought the change was in themselves. They found white violets and blues, and saw the gleaming grace of a big black snake slipping out of sight into the leaves of the last autumn. They seemed to sense all this together—like one being, partially separated, but receiving the same impressions and sensations . . . they acted as if they were absorbed in all these things, but they knew that they were really absorbed in each other. Then a sudden, tempestuous wind—splashing raindrops—and a downpour!

"There's a cabin somewhere—a summer camp—if we can find it!" she said breathlessly.

How hilariously they had found it, and broken in! She could see him now, kneeling to kindle that little fire on the hearth. . . . How good it felt in the April wetness! They had stood, both stooping over it, to warm and dry themselves, their shoulders touching, as the comforting warmth enfolded them, bringing out the sweet scent of the arbutus she had worn in her blouse. Then—how heavy the moments grew, weighted with a poignant sense of nearness . . . how swift and dizzy the silence seemed! They were alone, in this little place. . . . Out in the woods they had been alone—but differently; now they were alone within a shelter—not a house, with comforts and conventions—just a rude, elemental shelter from the wildness without.

A quiver of his arm—her indrawn breath—and into their quick-beating hearts came the thought—*no one need know—they could come here often before the summer* . . . then his arm round her suddenly, his lips upon hers. . . .

But an instinct deeper than passion saved her. With a great wrench of her spirits she had turned from him, towards the door. . . . She heard his voice behind her, low and shaken—then silence—a silence sinking desolately into her hurried heart-beats, while he stooped and stamped out the little fire. How deeply symbolic, that action! But Ellen did not think of that—she thought only of her desperate haste to get away—to run back again to familiar things—to safety . . . the rain was nothing—the distance was nothing—only to run . . . clinging desperately to those things that had saved her!

* * * * *

Afterwards, within the luxurious loneliness of her bedroom, she realized that, of it all, the spiritual shock had been the most profound—that she, Ellen Mainard, fastidious, well-bred—should have been assailed by anything so undisciplined—her thoughts stopped, could go no further—swinging back to the undeniable fact that she loved a man she would not marry, and had desired his love desperately, regardless of that fact. And there in the little cabin he had known that she desired it. . . .

She felt stripped of every shred of conventionality—ashamed of what she saw in herself, and he had seen in her; half unwilling now to fully acknowledge it. She could not quite believe, as she had stood there in her bedroom window looking out at the rain, that the little scene had really taken place—that she had been so close to such elemental things.

But some inborn instinct had saved her—the face of her world was unchanged; she had regained her poise. A month or two of perilous happiness—it could not have been more than that. But in the years that followed it came between her and every man who would have married her. With men she was first alluring, then baffling, then cold, letting the waves of passion that broke at her feet recede one after another.

Some sense of renunciation that all this had left behind it made these young ardent children of Hazbrook call her the Saint. Lightly at first, humorously, even—she had worn that title; then, imperceptibly, had assimilated it, and given it out again. But when shy, awkward boys and adoring girls confided in her she sometimes longed to say unexpected things. Instead she said almost nothing at all—but listened, and sympathized. And they all loved her, and thought her wonderfully wise.

III

FRIDAY found her, gowned to perfection, tentatively walking the length of the drawing-room car, searching faces. Then her own face lighted.

"Rita!"

"*Darling!*" Rita did not kiss her in this public place, she looked instead into Ellen's eyes, gripping her two gloved hands; standing there straight and very still, just looking. . . .

And Ellen, in seeing those eyes again, saw nothing else—not even the fine lines beneath them—saw only Rita, feeling again in her presence that glamour of mood, of sensibilities—that enthrallingly seductive gift of *feeling*, possessed by the most fascinating people—spirit and senses so blended as to completely captivate. There was no sense of the long separation between them; they were together—intimately, exquisitely together, as always. Each felt that there was too much to be said to begin. So they just enjoyed each other, amid a hundred trivialities, as the train slid them out of New York and along the icy Hudson and into Yonkers.

"You're slenderer," Rita said, surveying her, "but your eyes are just as blue."

She looked into those eyes:

"It isn't so much a feeling of oldness, Ellen . . . what have you done

to leave you like this—? so—immaculate—so *unscathed*. A little too much lavender and rose-leaves, darling!"

But Rita's eyes were warm and soft as she said it; it was comment, not criticism, and Ellen merely smiled.

Rita turned her head sharply, looking out of the car window:

"Lucy is sure to meet us in an electric—see if she doesn't. Dear little Lucy always does exactly what you knew beforehand she would do."

And Lucy did. Little Lucy, plumper than ever, with hair actually white! Placid as ever, but brimming over just a little with enthusiasm—and simply delighted to see them! What luck that they both could come! And Rita without a grey hair! Ellen and she were a pair of old ladies for you. Dear old Triangles—she *was* glad to see them!

There were tears in Rita's eyes. Ellen began to feel that it might take a prodigious amount of humour to see this episode through.

"You must room together, like old times," Lucy said as they entered her new and not unattractive house. "Mary will bring the bags."

She came and sat on one of the pink guest-room beds as they took off their wraps.

"Dinner at seven, my dears. Don't hurry, but I'll leave you in peace."

She came and kissed them both on her way out—her small face as sturdy as ever, her heart just as affectionate and kindly, and as of old, underneath all that seemed so commonplace, a surprising sweetness. It had been Lucy who had written to Rita faithfully, year after year. Lucy, whose comforting loyalty had never for a moment wavered, who had told Rita that she could always 'come to her' if things ever went wrong—Lucy who had sat down and cried so long ago when Rita had burned her bridges, and was beyond recall.

Rita's eyes followed her as she went out of the room.

"One couldn't help loving her. . . ."

Then her eyes met Ellen's, and with a swift movement her arms went round her silently. Again there was so much to say they could not even begin to say it.

After dinner—a cozy little candle-lit dinner that they all enjoyed—Lucy produced photographs of "the children." She was very modest about them, but pridefully maternal.

She smiled a bit wistfully:

"They *are* my pearls!" she said.

("Set in platitudes!" Rita added, *sotto voce*, then went over to Lucy and kissed her, just because she had said it.)

A maid came in and lit the little fire. Lucy turned out a light or two, made the cushions look a bit more comfortable and inviting on the sofa, and then took out her knitting. It was an afghan for the newest grandchild. Sally—the one who had given her more trouble than all the rest put together, was safely married, and surprisingly absorbed in that April baby.

"I never would have believed Sally could have made those little clothes," Lucy said. "But *I've* talked enough—it's time for confessions!"

There was a gleam of light in the sombre depths of Rita's eyes.

"I'm first on that list."

She smiled.

"The world counts me a 'dishonest woman'—I will at least be honest with you."

Ellen looked up and laughed.

"You sound Shakespearean, Rita!"

Rita turned swiftly.

"You! You're—*Dantesque!* Capable of all sorts of obsolete medieval impossibilities!" She moved, restlessly. "If Lucy'll let me smoke—"

Lucy looked up. "Of course! I do myself."

Ellen laughed again. It would have been characteristic of Lucy not to, but Lucy wasn't characteristic, she was merely commonplace.

Rita struck a match skilfully, lit a cigarette, and leaned back into a corner of Lucy's luxurious sofa. Ellen, in a charming gown of grey *charmeuse*, sat in the other corner, a pair of small grey suede slippers stretched out toward

the cheery blaze—a little too passive, a little too perfect, seemed to be the comment in Rita's eyes. Lucy, her half-low black dress drawn snugly over her breast, her cheeks rosy, her rather flat brown eyes as alert as her two plump hands, sat where the light was good, knitting swiftly. They were delightfully natural, almost unbelievably the same—these three—comrades in the old, comfortable, unreserved way.

"My dears," Rita said . . . "the world takes sin too seriously. As though there weren't other things a great deal more serious. . . . Stupidity, for instance! Sin—the kind society spells with a capital S—is a risky experiment, and has to be paid for. Don't imagine for a moment that I haven't paid. I have. With my life blood."

Vague smoke-wreaths floated round her, dimming the outlines of her nonchalance and grace. Rita wore a loose terra-cotta coloured gown of no civilized design, and hanging round her neck was a heavy pendant of lapis-lazuli, set in silver. Yes, Ellen thought, the years had but added sombreness to the mystery of Rita; but it was a sombreness that must have known great joy. Then out of the shadowy smoke came her voice again. . . .

"I had a child. Ellen dear, to think you've never known that"—she leaned gently forward, putting a thin hand on Ellen's knee. "I suppose because I loved his father—the boy was just like him. . . . Dark eyes—and such a slim, supple little body! And darling hands that held things—even when he was tiny. Hands that clung, and touched, and *felt*. When he was scarcely more than a baby he used to make funny little animals out of clay, but they were —unmistakably—*animals!* How excited his father was!"

She paused. . . .

"The child, you see, seemed the very flower of his own genius. . . . From then on he was absorbed in him—believed remarkable things of him. To please him I made the baby a little smock—and they used to 'work together' in the studio, only the baby thought it was playing. And all the time his father watched those amazing little hands in a perfect passion of eagerness. . . . I began to be—an outsider. And when I saw them together —both so strangely alike, both so unmistakably gifted—so happy together, so perfectly understanding each other —the boy seemed to belong to him and not to me. . . . I was not his wife, you see."

The smoke curled silently about her for a moment.

"But there was no doubt—no doubt at all—that the boy was his son. Physically, mine—but spiritually his. And he wanted his son to have the best possible chance—to be free . . . of me. The passion that had been for me turned from his mistress to something so much more wonderful—his son."

She spoke of these things with the calmness of one who looks back into the valley of decision through which her soul had passed. The passions that had swayed her then were quivering—alive still—but quiet now, with the quietude of things that have been overcome. The curve of her lower lip deepened as she spoke, giving in some subtle way quality and depth to all that she said, touching with a tragic shadow the weariness behind her words.

She put aside her cigarette.

"You see, through all the cruel pain of it, I somehow understood. Love had taught me so much. . . . I had been supremely selfish—and now, because of it, I could be unselfish. I had known great joy—and because of it I could bear—even this. . . . I couldn't —go—when he was too little; but I knew that some day I should. And I did—when he was nine years old." . . .

There was a quick catch in her voice which she stopped a moment to control. "And so, dear Triangles, you see, I paid. I left them together."

The moment was too poignant for speech, or movement. They sat silent. Then, Ellen, who had tears in her eyes, reached out her hand under the flowing folds of Rita's dress, as Lucy stooped to put a log on the fire.

"But I insist," Rita ended, "that the world takes sin too seriously. It's not an end—a blind alley—it's a means—a very difficult way of learning—that's all."

She rose, moving away from them, and opened the piano. Her fingers lay on the keys—strong, thin fingers, with no jewels. But she did not play.

Instead, she turned round on the piano stool toward Ellen.

"Why in the world haven't you married, dear old Blue-Eyes? I can't imagine."

"I was in love with the wrong person."

"Well? That often happens. So was I."

Ellen sent her a swift smile.

"Not so radically wrong as mine. I couldn't have married him, possibly. My ancestors would have turned in their graves!"

"All family trees have some shady spots, Eileen." Rita's mouth had the old mocking sweetness.

But as Ellen met her eyes a blush deepened on her own cheeks, rushing among the little fine lines that were everywhere, up almost to the whiteness of her hair.

"You're magnificent, Ellen! Being able to blush like that at *our* age! You're—positively—virginal!"

"They call her the Saint in Hazbrook," Lucy added, over her knitting.

Rita caught it up. "The Saint! Exactly. Now I might—possibly—have been an archangel; never a saint."

Ellen smiled. "You'd be a magnificent archangel, Rita!"

How wonderful Rita's eyes would be, shining with some message of God—how gloriously she would come—her soul on fire with divine meanings! For an instant Ellen felt that she almost saw her wings, then she turned from the brightness of that vision, her heart beating dully, her eyes dim. She felt a sudden realization that the brightness of life for them was over—the morning and the noonday for ever gone, the shadows lengthening. An overwhelming sense of sadness settled down upon her heart.

For relief she looked again at Rita. The world would never be a prison-house to Rita! Not even a prison-house of pain—if that should come to her; no fettering of her feet could keep her soul from soaring among the stars. . . .

IV

It was only later when she and Rita were undressing in Lucy's pink chintz guest-room that Ellen said:

"My dear, we're sixty!"

Rita met her eyes in the mirror. "But we're still ourselves—there's no denying that."

Rita was still superbly herself as she sliped on a soft silk garment of deep purple, unadorned and apparently seamless, but exquisite the moment its lines defined themselves against her slenderness. It would have been regal had she not worn it so heedlessly.

She stood still a moment, looking at Ellen in the mirror. . . . "The Saint. . . . You're—you're wonderful, Ellen."

Her eyes, with the unfamiliar lines about them, looked suddenly darker, and very weary, and for a moment her straight shoulders drooped.

"You have peace," she said wistfully, "and I can never again have that."

Ellen's eyes, too, had darkened. They were like dull sapphires under the white cloud of her hair.

"Peace!" she said. Then a cold little smile touched her lips. "It would seem that I might have had that. . . The trouble is . . . *That I have regretted.*"

Rita stood suddenly still, a black braid over each shoulder: "Regretted?"

Ellen coiled up softly all the whiteness of her hair, and pinned it as she spoke.

"You see, I was not big enough to do what—what I did. I was tempted once, terribly. . . . I thought I was a much finer person, and acted as if I

was—but I wasn't. I have spoilt it all by regretting."

There was a pause, then the Saint's sweet eyes looked away.

Rita stood very still, looking at Ellen's back—seeing through all that was so passive and placid, to the starved spirit within that virtuous body, and her heart was wrung. But through the dark of her eyes came a swift gleam of joy—this, then, was Ellen! The real Ellen—the girl she had known and adored, who had masqueraded as that person, Hazbrook's Saint! The stage-setting, the costume, the lines—had been thrust upon her and she had played the part charmingly: but here was the real Ellen—*her* Ellen—who was really none of these things: not acquiescent, not dully accepting life's negations—Ellen *regretting:* Ellen's spirit stripped of its conventional saintly garments—free and fearless at last!

Her voice was very gentle: "*Couldn't* you have married him, Ellen, dear?"

"No." Ellen shook her head. "Marriage means too much. . . . Think of his relatives—claiming me, claiming his children! And then try to think of me with a husband bewildered by the myriad things we unconsciously take for granted, who couldn't converse comfortably for five minutes with most of my friends! No, Rita—I might have married him and lived happily on a desert island, but never in New England!"

"Or you might have—*not* married him."

"Yes, but—you see—I thought I was above that! It was only afterward that I found myself wishing desperately that I *had!*" A faint flicker of humour showed in her eyes: "It would seem that even—virtue—is a risky experiment, sometimes! I, too, have had to pay."

She shut her eyes with a little tired movement, and Rita's eyes, watching her, were full of pity.

Then Ellen spoke again, keeping her eyes closed. "I saw him once. He was married. We spoke to each other quite casually. . . . But it was all gone—that—*delicacy of spirit.* He was just ordinary. So was his wife. I saw her. And—and a child or two. . . . It was all dulled—dampened—neglected—the thing I had seen and felt."

"Even divine fire must be more than kindled—it must be fed," Rita said softly.

"I could have fed it—not she," Ellen said.

She opened her eyes suddenly.

"*Was* my sense of *noblesse oblige* and—mid-Victorian morality—worth giving it up for?" she asked.

And Rita answered:

"Your *noblesse oblige* and mid-Victorian morality have left that divine fire—dust and ashes."

Still Ellen was not sure. "But one's influence—one's principles—society"—

Rita interrupted:

"One's influence can be a warning instead of an example. One's principles—principles go deeper than moral conventions; one's principles are—to love, and trust in a divine justice. Those two things cover everything that really matters. . . . And as for Society—Society prefers the conventional, desires to be satisfactorily and safely married. Society only looks toward the other thing for the righteous pleasure of shuddering at it. There's no earthly reason why most people *shouldn't* marry! You act as if everyone was longing for a *liaison,* but didn't dare. They aren't. Marriage is so much simpler, so much more—*ideal.* Love without marriage is a makeshift, and this wise old world knows it. It would have insisted on taking you as a warning, and so have ended your influential responsibilities."

Ellen sat silent for a few moments, then looked softly up. "I thought of myself—of my position—my obligations—instead of forgetting myself, or giving myself! . . . Is it—perhaps—that selfishness is the great sin—the sin that must always be expiated? Is that why Lucy is happy? . . . Is life as simple as that?"

"I believe you're right, Ellen." Rita

spoke slowly. "The great secret is that it *is* so simple. . . . Lucy knew it instinctively, we've had to learn it. And yet, I'd rather be you or me than Lucy. Because we've felt, and seen, and—suffered. Lucy has been just—happy."

"I wonder," Ellen answered. . . . "Anyway, I somehow wish that we were—*like* her . . . don't you?"

"Yes, I know. . . . I do wish we were. Wonderful—to be—just Lucy—and have no wishes at all! Let's go and say good-night to her—we always used to." With a swirl of purple silk Rita took Ellen down the hall.

Lucy rose from her knees by the bedside as they entered, looking almost pretty in a rosy, wholesome way, as she stood there in her nightgown smiling at them. Lucy was the ballast of the world—certainly the ballast of the Triangle!

"Here we three are!" she said, tossing a thin braid over a plump shoulder, "Ellie, who hasn't married, I, who *have*—and Rita, who *ought* to have!"

She looked at Ellen in her soft blue wrapper edged with eiderdown, then at Rita—regal as the Queen of Troy (Lucy had seen "Trojan Women")—tragic, too, and beautifully tender.

Then she spoke, confidingly:

"Do you know—with all my good luck, and happiness—in spite of Tom and the children, and everything—I've always envied you two. . . . There were always things I missed—things you seemed to feel and see. . . . Yes," she said, weighing her words slowly, as she looked earnestly at them, "I've envied you. . . ."

ACQUAINTED LOVE

By Gamaliel Bradford

IN early days, when love's abode was new,
A certain strangeness mingled with the charm.
We opened unused doors with sweet alarm
And shuddered at each deeper breath we drew.
Our meagre furnishings were all too few
To fill the barren spaces and disarm
Long winter loneliness or cover warm
The chilly crannies when the north wind blew.
Now the soft flight of years has gilded o'er
Bare walls with grace of wonted memory.
Love has no wish nor knowledge how to roam.
And day by day we savour more and more
The sweet content, the large tranquillity,
The blessed ease, the sunshine peace, of home.

A WOMAN loves a man more intensely if she knows her love is making another woman suffer.

HER MEN

By G. F. Macaulay

I

I SAW her first at Lucerne.

I am an Englishman, romantic, but not susceptible. I was young enough to be capable of folly, old enough to recognize dreams as such, and to realize that the Rome of all roads was—Compromise.

I had decided to marry because I had never been "in love." A sensible alliance was preferable to a lonely old age. I had known many nice girls—healthy young persons who made pleasant golf companions; pretty little coquettes whom one kissed between dances and a week later forgot; bright young women whose intelligence and breeding aroused respect but no passion.

It was a day of penetrating sunshine. I sat on the balcony looking out over Lake Lucerne, quietly meditating. I said, "It is all pretty nonsense, this waiting for a volcanic emotion. Such things are of the stuff of dreams, of books, not of life. Louise Evans is an amiable young woman, healthy, intelligent, good-looking, and with an agreeable income. She seems to like you. As soon as you return to London see if she—"

Just here my eyes caught sight of a girl reading a few chairs distant. My meditations melted as I watched her. At dinner the previous night I had noticed her, gorgeous as only Paris frocks on a New York girl can be. With her had been an older woman, apparently her mother, and as clearly negligible as the daughter was arresting.

Beneath the latter's artificiality of Paris and New York, I had sensed something primitive in her indolent grace and in her fearless, restless eyes, deepset, green, unsatisfied.

And now as I watched her furtively I was conscious of a vague, disturbing fascination.

I wanted to talk to her, to explore what lay behind the restless eyes. I hoped they might look at me as they had done last night to the blond young chap who had joined her and her mother over their coffee and liqueurs.

As she read she gave an almost imperceptible start, and bent lower over her book. Then suddenly she glanced up, and looked out toward the lake, her deep eyes passing over me as if I had been furniture. And they were not restless or fearless now. They were surprised, troubled. She bit her lip, returned to her book, read a moment, then leaned back in her chair.

The book fell from her relaxed grasp. In a flash I swooped on it and presented it to her.

She accepted it listlessly, muttering conventional thanks, but as her eyes rested on me they lit up (just a ghost of the look they had lavished on the blond chap last night) and her lips smiled slily, as if suppressing a little joke of their own.

The book was one of Paul Bourget's. I wanted to ask the reason of her tantalizing smile, but merely ventured a comment on Bourget, asking casually:

"You enjoy him?"

"No," she announced evenly, "I *dislike* him."

"Indeed! Then why—?"

"My decision is recent," she conceded, "as recent as the last page I have read."

"Won't you tell me his offence?" Anything to continue conversation, and so perhaps drift into acquaintance.

She was still smiling enigmatically, her eyes almost inspecting me. I felt rather uncomfortable.

"Yes, I'll tell you, because one confides only in strangers."

"Or lovers," I added automatically, and could have kicked myself for an ass.

She shrugged.

"Perhaps. But one is *honest* with strangers. Bourget has annoyed me by crystallizing a vague suspicion of my last five years."

"But how delightful!"

"You think so?" drily.

"Well, unless—"

She nodded earnestly.

"Exactly. It is something I prefer to disbelieve. It's queer, uncanny, and —too inevitable. However, *it's true*."

And she stared at me defiantly.

"Tell it to me, and I will deny it."

At that she laughed, a laugh which seemed to come from some unshared joke, in which I felt myself an unwilling part.

"I feel as if *I* were connected with your laugh and with Bourget's offensive passage," I hazarded.

She nodded.

"Good guess. You are."

"Tell me," I begged.

She shook her head smilingly.

I reached for the book.

She held it to me.

"I give it to you on one condition."

"Agreed."

She opened the book, tore out a page, stuffed it into her bag, and handed the incomplete volume to me.

"Keep it. I never want to read him again. But the condition you agreed to is that you won't get a duplicate copy and try to discover what is on the page I tore out."

I felt as curious as a woman.

She laughed.

"If you did, you might understand why you watched me last night, and why you jumped to pick up my book almost before it fell."

I shook my head.

"I don't need Bourget to explain *that*."

"All this is interesting," she replied, rising, "but Mother is almost English in her formalities, so I must wander away, and I won't be able to talk to you again, which is too bad, or I might have proved Bourget's point."

"If it was that I should—"

"Oh, please, not so direct!" she mocked.

"Quite right. Words are unnecessary. I saw your mother speaking to Lady Rounsdale. With your permission, I shall appease your mother's scruples by having Lady Rounsdale present me to-night, and then, who knows, even Bourget may not have—"

"Lady Rounsdale may present you, provided you don't refer to Bourget. I want to forget him. He makes adventure routine."

As she made to depart, I said sharply:

"Only this—you say Bourget explains my prompt rescue of your book. The real cause was your eyes, their look when you are thinking and their look when you talked to that chap last night. I wager all that isn't in Bourget?"

She laughed.

"You are quite wrong." Again she inspected me scrutinizingly, then added softly, almost nervously, "The real reason is that your nose is a trifle large and your eyes wide apart."

Then she laughed heartily, nodded, and departed.

My hand went to my nose. It *was* rather large, and my eyes *were* set a trifle wide apart. I felt baffled. Clearly she was ragging me, but why pick on my eyes and nose? Had she said lips, it would have been commonplace, but comprehensible by the idiotic tradition that a man's mouth betrays his whole attitude to the sex.

Later that afternoon I found Lady Rounsdale, and casually suggested she present me to her American acquaintances.

She agreed laughingly.

"It's no use, Bobbie," she warned. "Young Ashton is mad about the girl,

and she certainly encourages him. Also, all American girls are atrocious flirts. They haven't even the decency to hold off until they are safely married."

"Perhaps their way is as pleasing to a husband. They get it out of their systems *before*."

Lady Rounsdale's eyebrows rose. "My poor Bobbie, are you hit this time?" she mocked.

As I dressed for dinner I found myself lingering before the mirror, ruefully gazing at my nose and eyes. Anyway I was blond, as blond as Ashton, whom she liked enough to "encourage." Perhaps she fancied fair men. I hoped so

II

After dinner Lady Rounsdale presented me. But the favoured Ashton had arrived first, and I only got one dance from her. However, I cultivated mamma assiduously, while covertly spying on Ashton. It did not seem that her eyes were as kind to him as they had been the previous night.

Mamma, who was called Mrs. Wister, expressed a desire to get to the top of Pilatus. She complained that Lorraine kept postponing the excursion—Lorraine being her delightful daughter.

You may gauge the stage of my interest in Lorraine by the fact that I suggested forming a party the following day to ascend Pilatus. The girl consented lukewarmly.

That night in bed I read Bourget's tale, but the context gave me little clue to what the offending passage could have been.

The next day we ascended Pilatus, by inclined railway, thank goodness. One thing jarred my infatuation—her quick shrinking from the slightest contact with some destitute mountaineers we passed as we walked from the railway to the boat that was to bring us home across the lake.

When I remonstrated mildly that the woman had seen her draw her skirts away, she merely smiled and said:

"The poor are a poor lot."

"Witty, but unworthy," I replied priggishly.

She made no defence, simply gazed tranquilly at me, and her eyes seemed to say, "You can't help liking me."

That annoyed me, because it was true. I more than liked her. I felt absolutely ill when I learned that she and her mother were leaving Switzerland the following day. It made me reckless. I forgot Louise Evans, I forgot my phlegmatic past. I resolved to follow them wherever they went.

That night after dinner Lorraine strolled into the gardens with me. She was maddeningly attractive in a rather low-cut gown, and her eyes had an intensified form of the look I had seen in them when she had been with Ashton only two nights ago. Which should have sobered me, and didn't.

I wondered why Lady Rounsdale had called her a flirt. A coquette she certainly was not. She never used her eyes for sudden glances and droopings. She merely gazed steadily into your own until queer ideas surged dizzily up. Yet one dared not attempt familiarity. She was not that type.

At last I asked:

"Where are you going to-morrow?"

"Paris."

"How extraordinary!" I exclaimed. "Isn't life full of amazing coincidences? I have to go to Paris at once myself—business, you know."

Her eyes seemed amused at my clumsy lie.

"Oh, we are not *remaining* in Paris, just passing through for London."

I wilted.

A second lie was futile.

"May I go to London with you?" I asked abruptly.

She gazed tranquilly into my eyes and smiled.

"I like you," she whispered.

I forgot myself, and she rose coldly.

I pleaded, made rash promises never to offend again, and at last she reseated herself, and smiled tantalizingly at me.

"I am coming to London."

She shook her head.

"We will be only three days in London."

"Even so."

"And I have promised them to a young Scotchman who is coming down from Edinburgh."

"Are you going to marry him?" I blurted out.

"Perhaps. But I think not. He is very handsome."

She fingered a tiny enamel and diamond locket that swung low on a slender platinum chain from her neck.

"Would you like to see his picture?"

She snapped open the locket and held it to me.

By the light of a nearby lamp, I saw the photograph of a fair chap with clear, manly eyes. Somehow I felt more pity than jealousy.

She watched me narrowly, then remarked:

"No, you needn't be jealous. He is very adorable; you reminded me of him."

She slipped her finger nail under the photograph, drew it from the locket, tore it in two, and flung the pieces away.

"Whose photograph succeeds his?" I asked lukewarmly.

She looked frankly, a trifle unhappily, into my eyes, and replied quietly:

"I don't know."

"For his sake, I am sorry he met you."

"I liked him very much—three months ago," she muttered.

I said nothing, but that line of Wilde's flashed through my mind—

"*Oh, surely it is something to have been*
The best beloved for a while!"

Let her throw me aside next month as she had done this photograph of a predecessor, nevertheless I must follow where she led.

"And you won't see me in London?" I urged.

She shook her head.

"He is too nice to hurt—more than can be helped."

"And after London, you go?"

"Back to New York."

"What boat?"

She smiled.

"The *Olympic*."

"What date?"

"The twenty-second, from Liverpool."

"I shall be on her," I replied.

She turned impulsively, and caught my hand.

"Please don't! Please don't like me!"

I leaned as close as I dared.

"Why not?"

She shut her eyes.

"I am fickle."

"But some day—some man—"

"I'm afraid not."

I laughed.

"Nonsense. A radiant girl like you! You'll have to marry some chap."

Her fingers tightened about my hand, but she kept her eyes closed.

"Please! Please don't—feel that way to me! I—I'm really not worth it."

"My dear, I am modern. I do not expect a girl's past—"

She stiffened.

"Oh, please—I have kept all the 'rules,' but—I'm just hopelessly—*shallow!*"

She looked up. I could have sworn her eyes were wet.

I did as any other man would have done. She yielded, she even responded. A few minutes later I told her that I loved her, that I had never dreamed of such love. I asked her to marry me. For answer she kissed my cheek softly.

"I have loved so many," she whispered.

"But not like this?" I begged.

"No—not quite like this—though often it has seemed natural to be kissed by a man, but I rarely allowed it. I was saving shreds of illusion about myself."

I straightened.

"How long does your 'love' usually last?"

She smiled.

"Of course, it isn't 'love' at all. It's just hope. I *hope* he'll be able to make

me really love him. Sometimes a month, sometimes a week, sometimes only a few hours."

"Will you marry me to-morrow?" I knew I was mad.

She stared at me, that baffling, questing gaze of hers.

"Don't tempt me," she whispered.

I "tempted" her all I could, but it was no use.

Suddenly she remarked:

"I was really in love once."

"And?"

"I was so young I didn't dream it would not come again. I wanted to try my wings first. I told him he bored me."

"What did he do?"

"Do? He died—for me. But the ghost of himself married a stodgy East Orange girl and has three lumpy children."

"And you still care?"

"Oh, no, not at all. Completely healed, but—scarred."

"Badly?"

She laughed frankly.

"N-no. But such things are like appendicitis. You recover beautifully, never a twinge of the old pain. But you have a scar, and you are immune to further attacks."

I smiled.

"And I don't like being immune," she added smilingly.

"What has all this to do with Bourget and your eyes?" I asked abruptly.

She started.

"You promised. But—*everything*."

Again I urged a speedy marriage, promising to risk her fickleness.

She held my hand tightly, and looked squarely into my eyes.

"I dream of you before I sleep and after I wake. I want to be with you. I like you. But—it won't last."

"That is my risk."

She nodded gravely.

"Very well. I hope you win out. This must be good-bye now. We leave very early to-morrow morning."

"I will meet you next week on the *Olympic*."

She smiled.

"I hope that you will be there, and," softly, "that I will be glad to see you."

III

It was the first dinner on the *Olympic*.

Mrs. Wister had evinced no surprise at my presence, and had calmly permitted me to arrange for our three seats at table together. She seemed inured to such proofs of her daughter's charm.

Lorraine was wearing a wonderful dinner gown of soft, dull green, almost the shade of her eyes, and her hair was dressed in a new fashion she had picked up in London.

Her eyes were delightfully friendly. I had a cold suspicion that they were *too* friendly. She laughed and chattered to me as an old chum.

We commented lightly on the other diners as they passed to their seats. A tall, spare chap with keen dark eyes passed us. Lorraine smiled and remarked lightly:

"He is one of my men."

"At what period did he flourish?"

"Oh, not *yet*. I never saw him before. But I know he is one of my men."

"Very interesting, beautiful lady, but I differ. I size up that chap as very reserved and cold."

She shook her head.

"No—not to me. I can tell—any woman with temperament can—almost without looking, which men would like her. Now that man at the next table, that good-looking man with the red hair, he'd never care about me, never, if he saw me for years."

"A superstition; a pose to be interesting," I laughed.

She shrugged.

"Speak to him in the smoking-room. Ask him to make a fourth at auction with us. Then—*watch!*"

I don't know why I agreed, but I did. Probably it was the novelty of the dare, perhaps a humorous hope that the new man, who impressed me as a conservative unemotional type, might prove un-

responsive, and so give me a chance for a little laugh on Lorraine.

I was fool enough to speak to the chap after dinner. He proved very friendly, told me his name was Brookes, that he was a Canadian, and that he would be delighted to make a fourth at bridge.

I led him over and presented him to Mrs. Wister and Lorraine.

As he bowed before the latter she raised her eyes and smiled straight into his, slowly, amusedly, confidently, and I caught a quick gleam in his dark eyes that disconcerted my British phlegm.

We played auction.

My word, what a game! Lorraine scarcely spoke, but her eyes were baffling, exultant, blasé, by turns. Brookes hardly watched his play, so fascinated did he seem with Lorraine. I was annoyed, puzzled, angry at Lorraine, Brookes, myself.

After an hour Brookes had the courage to announce that it was a shame to remain indoors on such a night, and to ask Lorraine to go out on deck, requesting Mrs. Wister's sanction for a half hour.

Mrs. Wister responded languidly that her daughter could please herself.

Lorraine pleased herself by rising and gathering up a flimsy wrap, which Brookes got ahead of me in helping her adjust about her shoulders. As they departed, she half turned, and threw me an amused half wink over her left shoulder.

Mrs. Wister sighed as they left the lounge.

"Lorraine is so changeable in her friendships with men," she remarked wearily.

Then and there I showed my hand to Lorraine's mother, and asked her sanction of my suit. She was very phlegmatic.

"Lorraine isn't a bad child," she assured me. "She's always amiable, unselfish in little things, considerate of my comfort, but"—she shook her head—"I am sick of her endless men."

"Perhaps when she marries she'll settle down."

Mrs. Wister agreed.

"Yes, for she's a good girl. But she won't marry. I used to reason with her. She always replied, 'I won't marry until I'm not *interested* in other men.'"

I went to bed without awaiting Lorraine's return. I was angered at her triviality, annoyed that I should be so much in love with a girl so frankly shallow.

The next morning she was very contrite. She said she had only meant it as a joke, because I had disputed her intuitions as to which men she could appeal to.

She seemed sincere.

She was very gentle and sweet. She rubbed all my fur the right way till I found myself purring ecstatically.

But she had sown a seed in the Canadian's heart which burst into alarming fruition. He haunted her, his keen dark eyes hungry for a kind glance. He was so abjectly infatuated that I could not resent him.

Three days later he buttonholed me, and begged a frank avowal of my relation to Mrs. Wister and her daughter.

He said:

"There's no use trying to disguise it. I'm head over heels on Miss Wister. If you are engaged to her, I'll cut, but if not, I want to play square and tell you that I'm in this thing for all I'm worth."

I looked him up and down. He was a fine, clean boy, tall, spare, several years my junior, with dark, ardent eyes set rather wide apart.

I found myself replying irrelevantly:

"Did Miss Wister inform you that you feel as you do because your eyes are set rather wide apart?"

He stared.

"What are you getting at? Of course not."

"I don't know what I'm 'getting at,'" I remarked. "As to Miss Wister, I hope to marry her, but that is as far as it goes."

For answer he seized my hand and wrung it with boyish ardour.

"Then let's play fair by each other!

The lady decides, we play the game squarely by each other, and—*to keep any third man out!*"

I gasped faintly, but muttered:

"Very good."

Even as the words left my lips, Lorraine turned a corner of the deck with a middle-aged man with iron grey hair. And as they passed us Lorraine looked disconcerted, while in the eyes of her aging companion gleamed that same look that had been in young Ashton's, Brookes', and doubtless my own.

I believe I swore.

IV

THERE is not much more to tell. She didn't marry Brookes. She didn't marry me, nor Ashton, nor the young man from Edinburgh, nor the elderly man who also rapidly developed the Lorraine fever.

So far as I know she is still single, as I am still myself.

The only explanation she gave me in parting was something like this:

"The first man I loved—here is his picture. What do you see there?"

I glanced at it and shrugged. I was weary with wanting her and with discouragement.

She leaned to me nervously.

"Don't you see Brookes there in the eyes, and can't you catch a fleeting look of Ashton, and about the jaw and forehead can't you see the Scotch boy whose photograph I showed you in Switzerland? And can't you see that the man in this picture will look like my elderly *Olympic* friend thirty years from now? Don't you see a faint resemblance to yourself?"

I gazed long at the picture, and I seemed to see something of us all in it. Brookes looked hungrily out of the dark eager eyes; Ashton was there in the heavy blond hair; the boy from Edinburgh looked out from it; as she had said, the older men seemed to have shed three decades and to lie hidden behind the firm mouth and wide-set eyes; strangest of all, I fancied a look of myself in the eyes and in the rather large nose.

I made no comment

"You see," she muttered, "I gave him my best. It wasn't much, but my love for him *set* the mould, as it were, of my love-type in a man. The fact that I had appealed so to him shows that his was a type I had power over, and ever after I felt a stirring of dead dreams and hopes when some new man looked at me with anything of *him* in his appearance. And of course, if a woman feels that for a man, he always wants her."

Then she explained that she had exhausted the reviving effects of *my* particular resemblance.

V

I BOUGHT another copy of Bourget, and this is what I found on the missing page:

"You know the experiments that a contemporary physiologist tried with a series of portraits to determine in what the indefinable resemblance called family likeness consisted. He took photographs of twenty persons of the same blood, then he photographed these photographs on the same plate, one over the other. In this way he discovered the common features which determined the type. Well, I am convinced that if we could try a similar experiment and photographed one upon another the pictures of the different women whom the same man has loved or had thought he loved in the course of his life, we should discover that all these women resembled one another. The most inconstant have cherished one and the same being through five or six or even twenty embodiments."

YOU UNDERSTAND

By James Carteret

I WISH your wife would not look at me so sweetly. Not that I do not admire her, but . . . I feel furtive when she smiles so obviously . . . I . . . ah. . . . While your wife is charming, and really pretty, there are certain disadvantages . . . ah. . . . You will readily understand what I mean. . . .

I think she has some idea of the situation, yet she still continues to smile at me. Won't you ask her to . . . ah . . . transfer her attention to someone who has more leisure, or is more susceptible, or . . . ah . . . who could appreciate her more than I can? I . . . ah . . . do not mean that she should be rude, or . . . ah . . should frown whenever she sees me, or that I mind her smiles, or . . . ah . . .that I am not highly flattered by her interest, but . . .

Her smiles must stop, and stop instantly. Otherwise my wife will become jealous . . . and I do not wish my wife to become alarmed . . . or her suspicions aroused . . . just at this time. . . .

Of course you understand . . .

. . . A little dancer. . . . If my wife should have my habits investigated. . . .

You will speak to your wife, won't you?

WISDOM

By Orrick Johns

OUT of wisdom this I learned:
Flee from it as from a fire,
And with sail and rudder turned
Go to your desire.
All the winds shall follow then,
Every star shall look that way
Asking how a child of men
Can be wise as they.

TELL a woman she is beautiful and you substantiate her opinion. Tell her she is pretty and you but recall an immature past opinion.

EXHIBIT A

By Ben Hecht

I

BRANDER experienced the sensation which is popularly attributed to the Freudian wretch who dreams himself pitilessly nude in a ballroom thronged with a glittering company of noble, high-minded strangers. He cast a frantic eye upon the twelve ludicrous scoundrels who had lied their way into the jury-box. There was no mercy to be expected from this assortment of egg-headed jays to whom he had insanely given the privilege of sitting in judgment upon him. No intelligence, no sympathy, no grasp of fact or exercise of cold, analytical reason were possibly forthcoming from this collection of half-witted melancholy Barnabys sitting now with shoulders hunched forward and dolorous eyes fastened upon the hypocritical fiend shedding crocodile tears in the witness chair.

For the moment, Brander's frantic eye swept the twelve avid faces in desperate search for a glint of rationality, a glimmer of the derisive indifference with which any normal, red-blooded human being would have regarded this slap-stick tragedienne on the witness-stand. Derision! Indifference! Hell's bells and seven thousand devils! There wasn't a corpuscle of manhood among the whole twelve of them. Not a tittle of understanding, not an iota of cerebration in the collective mess of them. Gullible and pensive they sat—twelve long-eared, lugubrious examples of arrested development regarded by virtue of life's clumsy irony as a jury of his peers—listening to the testimony of Nancy Abbott.

Brander suddenly dropped them from his thought. His jaws locked and his nostrils contracted with a fierce intake of breath. The world's greatest fathead—a stentorian imbecile with a venomous quaver in his voice—was reading now from some folded sheets of paper. He held them in his hand, waving them aloft at intervals, snarling, barking and lapsing unexpectedly into burlesque passionate intonations.

"*My blessed and Adored One . . .*"

Brander turned over inside himself and died. The letter! He revived immediately. Death was a simplicity not to be granted him. Ostrich-like, he shut his eyes and with superhuman effort fought for an instant paralysis of his auditory nerves. The voice of this king of idiots reached perversely after him, overtook him, backed him into a dark corner and like some thousand-fisted adversary of nightmare proceeded to hammer him leisurely into a pulp.

"*To-night I can do nothing but kiss you. Even as I write my lips are pressed upon yours, O star of my life! O Eve of my Paradise! I can think only of one thing. I love you, want you, you great big glorious, wonderful doll Queen!*"

Suffering catfish! One-eyed, bow-legged turtles! Yellow, cursed, hump-backed rattlesnakes! Swiftly, silently, dizzily, Brander swore. Oaths like a hallooing family of Arabian acrobats, turned cartwheels through his brain. The voice thundered on:

"*Do you suffer as I suffer away from you, O my precious little polly-wolly? To-night when I reached my rooms I walked about thinking of you, you, you. You are my little lammie teeny snookums, aren't you, darling? Tell me. You must tell me!*"

Flaming goats! Calf-headed, kidney-footed caterpillars! Eight pages of it!

Where was the insensate fiend to compare with this cherubic-faced, sniffling Borgia confronting him from the witness-stand? Where the abandoned and abominable ingrate so lost to all honour and decency as this? . . .

Brander floated swiftly out of the window and turned six somersaults to the pavement, alighting on his head and scattering pleasantly into pieces of unidentifiable matter. Sweet hallucination! A snicker from the rear of the closely packed courtroom returned him whole and hopelessly alive to his seat at the counsel's table.

". . . There are moments such as now when I doubt. Do not smile, sweetest Nancy. But my soul and my heart crawl about within me crying out for you, you, you. I kiss the stars when I think of you. Words, idle words! Don't you feel the night pulsing with my love O lammie sweet? My duckiest little downy bunch of joy, when I was with you to-day I . . ."

Easy now. He had better open his eyes. A quiet, gently aloof smile. Think of something removed, something far, far away. Last summer on a fishing trip he had yanked out twelve bass. What a wonderful sport fishing was! That was better. Calm, calm, utterly calm as if he weren't listening. With just a slight indication of subtle disdain as befitted a man lost in the contemplation of life's perfidious mockery or something. There, now let the lardheaded clown read on! There were some men whose dignity no mongrel-souled lawyer could unseat.

Brander opened his eyes and raised the fiery and contorted countenance of a man in the throes of epilepsy toward the insanely solemn dignitary presiding between the two brass lampshades before him. And as if drawn by some mesmeric force, his gaze wrenched itself toward the creature in the witness-chair. A monstrous oath uncoiled like a hungry anaconda in his thought, reaching out, encircling the plump, tense figure in front of him and crushing it. This accomplished, Brander studied her with a certain relief, albeit she remained as plump and tense as before.

He had expected something rather low, something, in fact, diabolically low. Such a thing was to be expected from a blackmailing ingrate who could find within her the vulgarity to drag what had been their love into a court, to pillory their secrets in the limelight. The natural foulness of the female soul explained it in part. The unnatural depravity of this particular evil-ridden vampire explained the rest of it. But the letter! He had forgotten about the letter. And when he had remembered his imagination had paused, shuddered and died before the thought of its introduction. A woman who diverted herself dismembering children, whose chiefest joy was setting fire to the whiskers of helpless old men, would still have been incapable of so vile an act. And for the hundredth time that day Brander repeated to himself the headline which had greeted him at the breakfast table as he opened his newspaper:

STENOGRAPHER ASKS $50,000 HEART BALM

ELIAS BRANDER, WEALTHY BROKER, ON TRIAL FOR JILTING FORMER EMPLOYEE. SENSATIONS PROMISED IN PASSIONATE LETTERS.

CALLED HER HIS LAMMIE TEENY SNOOKUMS.

Since the day the creature had filed her suit, a matter of two months ago, he had been preparing himself. Nevertheless the last phrase in the headline had given him a violent attack of indigestion. His first impulse had been to hurl himself upon the various editors responsible for the nauseating lie. For fully ten minutes he had paraded about his small dining-room shouting abuse at the Press. Letters indeed! What letters? Libel—ten million dollars libel—they'd feel different about blaspheming the character of a citizen when they'd counted out the last nickel of reparation coming to him.

And then, staring suddenly out of the window, a powerful memory had overtaken him. There was something sickeningly familiar about the phrase "Lammie teeny snookums."

Brander, from his position of vantage at the counsel's table, looked suddenly down upon a world given over to unimaginable villainies. The throng in the courtroom, with avid, shining faces, the unctuous bellower waving aloft the folded sheets, the chin-whiskered potentate between the brass candle-shades, the twelve scoundrels in the jury-box—what a symbol all of them made of the hideous farce that went by the name of life.

"*. . . Thou art the crown of my days. I give to thee the blood of my heart and call thee my beloved. Sweet, sweet, triple sweet siren, will Thou ever lovest me as I lovest you, you,* YOU? *No, for you are a woman, a glorious wonderful woman, to be sure, and woman cannot love as man lovest. See, I have become a philosopher through you, Nany Pany. If only you could realize for a single tiniest, weeny bit of a single tiniest, weeny half second . . .*"

Brander hanged himself from the effulgent chandelier over his head, a peculiarly slow and painful thing to do in the presence of joyously convulsed idiots hurling little torches of laughter at his dangling body. For the moment he stared down upon the thing in the witness-chair, stared until his eyes bulged out of their sockets and his tongue grew frozen. He returned, as by some despicable habit of reality, to his seat at the counsel's table. Five more pages!

II

"WE'LL adjourn until to-morrow at nine o'clock, gentlemen."

Brander shot to the surface from the depths of loathsome sub-strata.

The courtroom was in an uproar. Voices flapped about his ears. Men and women were swarming toward the doors. He rose from his chair, his legs bending like whalebone under him. His head revolved and his throat and eyes burned. He glanced at his two attorneys, who were carelessly strapping shut their black leather portfolios.

"Will you want me to-night?" he croaked.

One of them shook his head without looking up.

Brander started for the door. People drew back, giving him passage. In the midst of the swarm he moved in seemingly enchanted isolation. All thought had left him. To get away! To vanish! To put this abominable scene behind him!

He turned from the elevator door at which he had been waiting and made for the stairs. Caught by surprise, the crowd hesitated. Two, four steps at a time, Brander leaped downward. He heard the rush of feet above, cries, laughter, "There he goes. Hurry!"

He had eluded them. His breath came in hot gulps from his opened mouth, his head whirled as if he had alighted from a violent merry-go-round. People who didn't know him, who didn't know he was Elias L. Brander were scurrying by him. Beautiful sensation! He walked slowly like a soul reborn into the effacing crowd of the street. He could collect himself now and think rationally of what had been. But like a foul and bedraggled cur wagging its ridiculous tail, the memory of the day trotted along at his heels, leaping up to lick at his hands with stubborn, hideous loyalty. He let his thought circle back through the hours of torture in the courtroom.

The postscript to the letter that had been read held his memory fascinated.

"*Darling, burn this at once.*"

Brander smiled. He was still man enough to smile at the exquisite clownishness of this last line. Yes, she had burned it at once. She had told him, swore to him, that she had. Beautiful creature! Trustworthy soul! How in Heaven's name had he ever . . . !

He shook his head as he walked. He had asked himself this before. It was a question most properly answered by a

succession of obliterating oaths. He answered it. The weariness which was upon him made his answer a bit vaguer than usual, a trifle less conclusive.

In the crowded street-car, Brander stood, unseeing eyes fastened upon a red, yellow and black placard advertising the supreme virtues of a certain type of hair net. A net, that was it. She had spread it around him, lured and trapped him. The harmless little car advertisement became to his unfocused eyes a work of morbid art detailing the tragedy of his day. His street! He darted and pushed through the crowd. On his way to his rooms his shame again inundated him like sweeps of filthy water hurled over his head.

He sat down in the unlighted room, sinking deep into the large chair—a huge, comfortable creation of wood and leather symbolic of his untrammelled bachelordom. He sat there with eyes closed, weary, his spirit ebbing swiftly. There were two more letters! Painfully he thought of them. He had refused to read them over when they had been offered him by his attorneys after being entered as exhibits B and C. He had cursed himself into a state of verbal impotence during the day. He could curse no more. His thought was at the mercy of memory. In vain he sought to blast from his mind the phrases which thronged into it, the voice of the creature's lawyer, the image of the creature herself. Puny expletives, they fizzled harmlessly out, leaving him the prey of all that rioted into his vision. Covering his face with his hands, he let himself weep.

III

It was entirely dark when Brander rose at length from his chair. A loneliness weighed in his heart. He walked unsteadily toward the wall and switched on a single light. A short, helpless, paunchy figure, somewhat bald, simply and kindly featured, he stood staring with mild, watery eyes toward his desk. Another day of it! Another day of listening, of torturing under the introductions of exhibits B and C! With a despairing gesture he dropped into the wooden chair in front of his opened desk.

"God pity me," he mumbled. "I can't stand it."

He sat motionless for a space and then his hands reached out, his fingers embracing a pen in the back of the desk. In a moment he was writing, swiftly, feverishly. Into his face had come a certain relief. His eyes gradually lost their watery air and became lighted with new emotions. A sigh slipped from his lips. He wrote:

"*Oh, my sweetest, darlingest Isabelle:*

"*What I have suffered to-day, and you so far away! If only you were here, if only I could place my hands about your dear, wonderful head or rest my head upon your sweet bosom and weep! Oh, my gloriousest girlikins, how I long for you! For you, you,* YOU, *and nothing but you. In my agony I see your face shining like a beacon star and my soul rushes out to embrace it. You are all I have left, you adorable lovikins, you great big bunch of honey and joy. Come to me in spirit now, come lay your hands upon my bruised and bleeding heart. For I love you. Forgive me if you can for what is happening. But I have exlained it all to you before. Don't ask for any more explanations. Remember only that some day, some wonderful, rapturous day when we are at last together, together until death do us part only to reunite us in heaven, I will prove to you the great, noble love that is in me, the bliss that the mere tiniest weeniest thought of you suffuses me with. X X X X X X X X X X X X X. These crosses are kisses, big, wonderful kisses. Take them. There are more where they came from. Oceans and oceans. Your broken-hearted, adoring little lovikins gives them to you, you,* YOU. . . ."

Brander paused and breathed deeply. He raised his eyes and stared raptly through the window at the stars shining upon the night. And with another deep, long breath he returned to his writing. . . .

"NOTHING BUT GOOD OF THE DEAD!"

By Stephen N. Burroughs

I

THIS, Marvin kept saying to himself, was the last time! He was through with Elsie for ever. That last squabble in Atlantic City was the end. Over and over again in his chair on the New York bound express he kept repeating it to himself:

"I'm through with it! Through with it! Through . . ."

And his intentions had been so good! He had tried, so sincerely, to make a fresh start with her. After that silly trouble over Clare he had asked her forgiveness. Yes—though there hadn't really been anything to forgive—he had only taken tea with Clare and a drive in the park to talk over old times. But, to humour her, he forgave her jealous transport and begged her forgiveness. He had done that! And, to conciliate her, to make a fresh start really possible, he had proposed this flying trip to Atlantic City.

With radiant enthusiasm she had accepted the proposal.

"A second honeymoon!" she had said, laughing.

So he had wired to reserve the same suite at the same hotel at which they had stopped on their way up from the South on their wedding-trip. And, miraculously, it being still early in the season, the suite had been reserved for them.

That was on Wednesday. And now, on Friday afternoon, he was speeding back to New York. He had left Elsie in their rooms at the Chelsea scribbling a telegram to her tiresome mother. He hoped she would really send it this time. He hoped her mother would really come. He hoped Elsie would return with her. Do whatever she liked. As for him—he was through!

This was really the last time. He had done his best; he could do no more. He couldn't help it if women liked him. He couldn't disfigure himself so that all women should turn away from him in aversion. Just because Elsie was unreasonably, insanely jealous. He couldn't and he wouldn't. Not by half. . . .

He had made one last try and it had failed. Failed wretchedly. He reviewed the last few days. It had really started quite deliciously. Elsie had been in charming mood. She had looked quite lovely. They had reached Atlantic City in high humour. Almost in expectancy. . . . Elsie's delight, when she entered the identical rooms commanding the identical view of garden, boardwalk and ocean, where they had spent their honeymoon, was unfeigned.

"It was ever so sweet of you, Dickie," she had said. And kissed him. He was pleased at his own tact in the arrangement and things went off capitally that evening. They dined delightfully, went for a chair ride, and retired early. He recalled her shyness on their first visit till she laughingly cried to him to stop. . . .

The next morning he rose long before she did, went for a dip, had breakfast in the Grill and, glowing and comfortable, started down the boardwalk. The long rhythmic, powerful stroke of a solitary girl swimmer had caused him to pause admiringly. He wondered that a girl should be out so early, swimming alone, and he took pleasure in

watching the clean, clear movement of her, and the flash of her arms in the sun. . . .

After a moment something about her, the poise of her head even as she lay in the water, struck him as strangely familiar, though very far off. He watched her, fascinated, till she came in close enough for him to see her face. In a flash he remembered: a dance at a hotel in Lucerne three years before. She had been accompanied by her husband, a man thirty years older than she. They had been introduced, to the evident displeasure of her ancient husband; had danced together, and, in a breathless moment he had kissed her. . . . When he looked for her the next morning—he had wrung an appointment from her—she and her husband had left the hotel. He tasted again, with the thrill of seeing her, the poignancy of that sharp regret.

He left the boardwalk, got to the beach and stood waiting for her. Would she know him? It was three years ago and she had seen him only for an hour. Yet he felt that she would remember. And what if her husband were dead—!

At last she came plunging out of the surf like a Naiad, shimmering, breathless, her wet bathing things clinging to her. Her hair had escaped from beneath her grotesquely-striped bathing-cap and blew across her eyes so that she did not see him till she had almost collided with him. He did not stir from her path. An incipient indignation crossed her face. But it disappeared in a moment as she looked more closely at him.

"Is it?" she cried softly.

"Yes," he whispered, grasping her wet hands.

"Lucerne!"

"Yes."

"I thought you were the most fascinating man—"

"And I thought you were the most wonderful girl. Why—oh, why did you run away?"

She puckered her lips into a charming grimace.

"That's one way of meeting temptation you know!"

"I was frightfully disappointed. You know you said you'd meet me the next morning—early—"

"I know. But one can't always keep those promises one wants to keep. But now—things are different."

He looked into her eyes.

"Are they?"

"A little. I won't have to run—unless you make me. Will you wait for me? Till I get dressed?"

"I'm afraid to let you out of my sight."

"You needn't be afraid—this time. Mother's with me but she's still asleep. She sleeps all the morning. Fancy! In weather like this! You may call for me in an hour. We're at the Blenheim—"

And then she ran away, with a swift smile at him. He looked at his watch. It was nine o'clock. He started for the boardwalk and began to walk very fast. He was as excited as a schoolboy on a stolen excursion to the city. It was always like that with him. He had often wondered why it was that the prospect of a new friendship with a woman always exalted him with a sense of strange, high adventure. Even when the woman in question was as experienced as he. . . . Of course this case *was* different! She was exquisite, this girl who had crossed his path miraculously again, provocative and reserved, inexplicable somehow. He thought them always inexplicable—at first. That was perhaps why he exercised such charm for a certain type of woman. He accepted kindness with a half-wondering thankfulness. . . . Once even, he thought Elsie, his own wife, the most transparent of women, inexplicable. . . .

At the thought of his wife he was conscious of a feeling of annoyance. Why hadn't he come to Atlantic City alone? It was just like Elsie to pick a quarrel with him and make him take her along. In his irritation he forgot that if it were not for this quarrel with Elsie he would not have come at all. . . But he went to his hotel, found that

Elsie was still asleep, and leaving a note that he had gone for a dip and would not return before luncheon, went at once to the Blenheim.

She came toward him gladly, carrying her parasol high, beautifully dressed in a close-fitting, light coloured gown and a rose-lined hat that shed a delicate glow over her face and matched the flowers on her dress.

"Have you breakfasted?" she asked.

"Yes. Hours ago."

"So have I. Then we can do anything we like. Come on!"

He marvelled at her gaiety. She was like a girl on a holiday. She caught something of his feeling.

"You know," she said when they had reached the boardwalk, "I'm very fond of Atlantic City. I've always wanted to come here and do just what I liked —mingle with the crowds and ride endlessly in these chairs and go to the Piers. And this is my first chance! I found most of those places in Europe pretty tiresome—"

"How long have you been back?"

"Two weeks. This is my holiday. And fancy my running into *you* right off— Oh, let's get in, shall we!"

She got inside a wheel-chair before he could answer and he followed smiling indulgently, delighted at her enthusiasm.

"You know," she said, "I'd much rather this than any amount of driving around Lake Como or Naples or Wiesbaden. I knocked about for over two years at the stupid German places—"

"I hope the waters helped you," he said to draw her out.

"Oh it wasn't for myself. It was for my husband—poor old dear."

"And is he—?"

"He's dead," she said briefly. "You know he couldn't stand this country. I believe a day at Atlantic City would have killed him."

"Funny—"

She looked at him quickly as though appreciative of the note of sympathy in his voice.

"Isn't it? Four years! You know I feel as though I've known you for a long time and can talk to you and you'll understand—" She broke off suddenly. "I wonder why it is that people marry anyway?"

"They seem to keep on doing it," said Marvin evasively. "Especially women."

She laughed. "Don't they! After this I'm not going to marry again—ever. And I'm not going anywhere at all I don't want to go—"

He found himself wondering how old she was. His recollection of her had been that she was not a girl but a woman, he had thought her quite mature without definitely appraising her age. But now as he watched her it suddenly came upon him that she was little more than a girl, not much over twenty one or so. He suddenly asked her how old she was when she married.

"Eighteen," she answered promptly, as though the question were a perfectly natural one.

They rode on in silence for a while. It seemed to Marvin that the girl's story unrolled itself before his eyes with perfect clearness. A lovely young girl, poor, a goading mother, and a rich elderly suitor. Poor child! She couldn't have had a very good time of it. The old man had probably been very jealous. And now that he was out of the way, the repressed emotion of the past four years was bound to assert itself. . . .

He stole another look at her. She was charming! What a lucky devil he was to have come across her like this —by the sheerest of accidents. It was quite delicious, the whole thing. She was half child, half woman. To be with her combined the pleasure of showing undreamt-of wonders to an eager child, with the piquancy of more seasoned adventure. . . . Yes, he was indeed lucky! An enchanting prospect began to open up before him. . . .

And then, suddenly, the chair having been caught in a crush before one of the hotels, he became conscious of a white-faced woman at the edge of the crowd staring with blazing eyes—Elsie!

He started to call to her, but before he could say anything she had turned away and disappeared in the crowd.

He felt his face burning with shame. What a wretchedly uncontrolled way to act. Elsie had no more poise than an angry child with whom things have gone wrong at a picnic. It was not so much embarrassment of which he was conscious, as shame.

After a moment he felt that the girl beside him was staring at him curiously.

"Who was that woman!" she asked quietly.

Marvin's first impulse was to lie, but he overcame it. After all, why should he? It was a pettiness that he could not quite bring himself to stoop to. So he turned to her squarely and answered in an even voice:

"My wife."

"Oh! I didn't know you were married! I thought—"

"When I met you I wasn't."

"Strange, isn't it? Our positions are reversed."

"Life's little ironies," he muttered.

"Yes." And after a silence: "She is very fond of you, isn't she?"

"I suppose so. In her half-civilized, possessive way—"

"You mustn't speak that way. It isn't nice."

"Our morning is spoilt," he said, looking at her with conscious piteousness.

She patted his arm consolingly.

"Don't worry," she whispered.

"You dear!" he breathed, genuinely grateful.

"I don't go running around after *her*," he said after a moment with renewed irritation. "Why can't she leave me alone?"

"That's just what I used to think! I even said it to him. When he made that awful fuss about my letting you kiss me!"

"Do you mean that he knew—!"

"Yes. He was watching us from behind some palms."

"The cad!"

"Sh. You mustn't!"

"*De mortuis nil nisi bonum*, eh?" he said somewhat grimly.

"Yes. Whatever that means. . . ."

II

A JERK of the train caused an abrupt hitch in his thoughts. The bumpiness of the train added to his irritation as he remembered the rest of the sorry incident: how he had gone back to the hotel late in the afternoon (he had purposely stayed longer than he had intended with Mrs. Allston in order to make Elsie sorry for her wretched conduct of the morning) to find his wife in a shrill rage, the scene of angry recrimination, her tiresome tears till he was literally forced to run away.

And now he was back on the express to New York. He had become as angry as she and it made him uncomfortable. He hated to be angry. Why couldn't people go through life amiably, enjoying things. That was what he should have liked, but ridiculous people like Elsie made it impossible. Well, he was through with the whole business at last! The funny thing about it all was that he was so utterly unblamable. Could he help it that he had met by sheer accident a woman he had not seen for years? Could he help it that he had kissed her long before he had known that Elsie was in existence? Could he help it that she was beautiful and a widow and liked talking to him and riding in boardwalk chairs? Certainly not! He, Richard Marvin, was certainly a much-imposed-upon gentleman! He rebelled against his whole married life. What petty, stultifying restrictions Elsie had tried to put on him! What a failure, as an institution, marriage was, anyway! It forced people to act like a lot of furtively morbid adolescents whispering in the darkness. . . .

The magazine lying on his lap dropped to the floor of the car with a jerk of the train. Marvin bent low to pick it up. As he did, something caught his eye. It was a tiny patent

leather shoe and several inches of silk stocking.

Marvin might have been mistaken, but it seemed to him that the shoe and foot had moved toward him as he bent over, ever so slightly, but ever so provocatively. For a time he busied himself with his paper and then, shifting around in his chair as though with discomfort at a cramped position, he caught a glimpse of the girl behind him, a little creature with great dark eyes and lustrous black hair. She laughed deliciously.

"I was wondering how long it would take you to become aware of me!" she cried.

"Fay!" was all he could say.

"It's only in the last five minutes that I've noticed you. I've been in the dining-car. I began by admiring the back of your head. I never realized you had such a nice back to your head!"

"Fay!" he exclaimed again, as though incredulous at his good fortune. "You dear child!"

"I'm not a child," she pouted. "Just because I'm little you always call me child. I wish you'd stop calling me child. Even if you are married and I'm not."

"But you're engaged, aren't you? To Cliff Weston?"

"No, I'm not. It's broken off."

"What under the sun for?"

"Cliff's too jealous. He wants me to shut myself away from everything in the world but him. For instance—if he were on this train—which, thank Heaven, he isn't—and he'd stepped out and come back to find me chatting here with you about nothing at all, he'd be nasty for the rest of the day. In fact it would be hard to convince him that it was perfectly innocent—"

"Even if it weren't?"

"Oh, you horrid thing! Tell me—how is Elsie?"

"Weeping. Crying for her mother. In Atlantic City."

She held up her forefinger in mock admonition.

"Richard! What have you been up to now?'

"Nothing at all. Just prattling with an old friend in a silly boardwalk chair. Girl I'd met in Lucerne. Nothing in it at all. Just as I'm talking to you. Elsie made a frightful scene over it. Couldn't convince her it was perfectly innocent. I tell you, Fay, it's beastly being married to a jealous woman. I'm never going to do it again."

"You poor boy," she crooned. "I'm afraid you've been having a horrid time."

"Haven't I, though!"

"There! there! Forget it. It'll be all right." She patted his arm consolingly. It was the second time that day that a woman had patted his arm consolingly.

"But I don't want it to come right! I tell you, Fay, this time I'm through. I can't tell you what I've suffered."

"Poor boy! Tell me—have you had your dinner?"

"No. I've been too miserable to eat."

"Well, go in now and have it. There's a good boy!"

"I don't want to leave you, Fay. I tell you it's good to see you again—to have a reasonable talk with a girl!"

"I'll go with you."

"Haven't you dined?"

"I'll sit with you," she said, smiling demurely at him. "And when you get to the dessert I'll have some with you."

"You're a brick," he said feelingly. They rose to go into the dining-car. He felt his burdens infinitely lightened somehow.

"Do you remember what it was I used to like for dessert?" she asked.

"Let's see. Raspberry ice and roquefort! Wasn't it . . . ?"

III

By the time the train pulled into the Pennsylvania Station Marvin was in wonderful humour again. Really, Fay was the jolliest girl he had ever known. He wondered how it was that he had seen so little of her in the old days. Of course she had been very young and it would have caused talk if he had

openly run about with her. But now she had matured surprisingly. She had acquired a depth of sympathy, Marvin thought, that he had never suspected in the thoughtless, rather giddy girl, little more than a child, whom he had seen running about in pink frocks and parasols.

They decided it would be more discreet if he did not leave the train with her, so they separated as they neared New York, but not until they had made an appointment to meet in the Park the next afternoon. Fay wanted to give him a spin in her new roadster. He quite forgot his troubles with Elsie in listening to her sunny chatter about the wonders of her new car with its low rakish body and its wire wheels and long, sharp-pointed hood. When he left her he felt the same glow of excited expectancy at his next afternoon's engagement as he had felt a few hours before while waiting for the appearance of the girl from Lucerne. He went to bed that night singularly light-hearted and fell asleep thinking what a dear, sympathetic, lovely creature Fay Taylor was. . . .

The next morning he rose rather late, dressed with unusual care and went to his club for breakfast. He had loafed in bed for nearly an hour lost in a haze of romantic imaginings — through which fluttered most prominently the vision of Fay Taylor. What a dear creature she was! How young and naïve and unspoiled. And yet, somehow—how mature—and sympathetic—

Above all, now that he had made the final break with Elsie he was conscious of a delightful sense of freedom. Thank Heaven *that* was over!

What a fool he had been, with his nomadic temperament where women were concerned, to marry Elsie, whose affections were so deucedly sedentary. He couldn't understand how he had done it except as he supposed, that in her way Elsie *was* pretty. How humiliating it was to be made to account to a woman for every look, every act, every vagary of appreciation that had not for focus her own self, her own heart! How trammelled he had been, how enslaved? But now he was free! Free!

And, to celebrate his freedom, he was to devote this day to the lovely Fay, who was at the opposite pole from his own wife, so little *exigéante*, so confiding, who asked, only to please and to comfort, to be liked for herself alone.

IV

He walked to his club in the brilliant sunshine feeling a new zest for life. He realized now how depressed and unlike himself he had been during these past months, how old he had become. Now he was in the mood that, two years before, had been habitual with him, the mood which gilded every day with a promised adventure. Now it would be again as it had always been. . . .

He reached his club, and, conscious of an unusual sense of sheer well-being, ordered an inordinately large breakfast. While waiting for it to come, he opened his paper, scanning it with the casualness of a man for whom its contents have no real interest. He skipped the leading articles and editorials as was his wont, and turned to the inside pages. And therein, one of the first things that caught his eyes was an inconspicuous paragraph headed:

"*New York Woman Attempts Suicide in Atlantic City Hotel.*"

The meagre lines which followed told that a Mrs. Marvin of New York had attempted to commit suicide by taking poison in her rooms in a hotel in Atlantic City, and that it was not believed that she would recover. That was all. No details. The thing had the horrible crispness of a telegram.

He rose from his table in a daze and almost groped his way out of the room. For a long time he could not clarify his thoughts beyond the one overmastering sense that he must go to his stricken wife as soon as possible. That was all of which he was conscious beyond an absurd desire, which he knew he must control, to cry. . .

Somehow he managed to convey to the headwaiter that a great calamity had befallen him and that he wanted a taxi. The headwaiter and the door-orderly helped him with the overt sympathy of hirelings, to get his hat and cane and got him into the cab. For this sympathy he was grateful with the gratitude of normally unimportant people who find themselves suddenly centering attention through some bereavement.

He waited for his train in a haze. Everything had gone out of his mind, washed clean, except this terrible blow that had befallen him, this incredible blow. Suddenly his quarrel with Elsie, which a half hour before he had been quite sure would separate them both forever, had lost all significance, all proportion. Could it be that he had quarrelled with her Actually quarrelled? Over what? Over just what had they quarrelled? He couldn't remember. And yet if they hadn't quarrelled he wouldn't be here. She wouldn't have killed herself. For she was dead—he was sure of that—she was dead—

And it was he who had killed her. *That* cleaved through his mind like a sword-thrust. He had killed her! By his neglect and his selfishness he had killed her. If only she were alive, if only she held on, didn't die, he would make it up to her, enslave himself for her, build up again her happiness by a vast, unremitting devotion. If only she lived to give him a chance again, one chance again. Never had he realized how much he loved her, how much she meant to him till now. . . .

Suddenly pictures of her began to come before his mind's eye. Pictures of her—as he had seen her when they first met—in different frocks and stray postures. How utterly charming and beautiful she was. Every one admitted that Elsie had a rare, even a distinguished beauty. And now it was passed away? Could that be true? Was he never to see Elsie again in her radiant beauty? And he had done it! People would say that he had done it. By his heartless neglect of her. And it would be true. Ah, why had she done it! Didn't she know, couldn't she tell that way down deep no other woman meant anything in the world to him, that she, his wife, the woman he had married, was all in all to him, the thing he lived for!

How beautiful she had been! He remembered her as she had looked that last day in Atlantic City, how pleased she had been with his getting the same rooms in which they had spent their honeymoon, how delightfully she had taken his sallies about their first visit just after they were married.

Would she be much changed when he saw her? Would she be still alive? Would she reproach him? Or would she forgive him? He thought he should not be able to bear her forgiveness. . . .

Being a sentimentalist the thought of death was to him at once terrible and romantic. He could not remember anything about Elsie except what was transcendingly beautiful and noble, nor about their own relations anything that was mean or petty or ugly. She had been everything adorable and good; he had been a beast trampling her sensitiveness and sublime adoration in the mire of his sensualities. How could he have treated her so? Why hadn't he spent his life in worshipping her?

The hours on the train were spent in an agony of self-reproach. At moments he felt that he could never again lift his head among men, that he would go away somewhere, far, where no one knew him, where the story of his perfidy would not reach. This thought crystallized in his mind and tortured him; that his wife had killed herself because of his unkindness and that people would know it and people would say it! There would be further headlines in the newspapers:

"*Mrs. Marvin Said to Have Taken Her Life Because of Her Husband's Infidelities.*"

The words burned themselves into his brain. What would Elsie's mother say,

her brothers, her friends? And his own? There was no doubt of it. He would have to go away!

He thought vaguely of Africa. And then he felt a twinge of self-pity. He hadn't been meant for Africa. He who loved cities so and youth and the blandishments of civilization. Strange how things worked themselves out—strange—pitiful—strange!

If only he found his wife alive. How he would make it up to her! Maybe he wouldn't make it up to her! If only he found her alive!

V

As the train neared Atlantic City he felt himself seized by a sort of panic which nearly made him faint in his chair. He did not see how he could summon the courage to go into his wife's room—to look upon her body. Would it be disfigured? Poisons, he had read somewhere, did horrible things to people. . . ! What had he done to deserve this agony!

Through a sort of smarting blackness, knowing nothing but the painful, trip-hammer pounding of his heart and a nameless fear, he made the journey from the station to the hotel. With steps that trembled as the steps of very old men tremble, he entered the hotel. He did not dare to go to the desk to inquire. He knew he should not be able to make his voice heard. . . . So he made his way to the elevator and hoarsely managed to enunciate the words:

"Seventh, please."

He felt the contemptuous look of the elevator boy. Already the world looked upon him as a criminal. He stumbled out of the elevator and went to his wife's rooms—the rooms where they had spent their honeymoon!

He stood outside the door a moment, swaying. . . . Then he lifted his hand and knocked. . . .

"Come!" said an imperious voice from within.

He knew that voice.

It was Elsie's mother!

So then it was over! He stood there, unable to steel himself to push open the door. Suddenly it was flung open for him. Mrs. Barron stood before him.

"It's you, is it!" she said coldly.

And then someone flew from behind her and threw her arms around his neck. . . . Elsie! Alive, warm, radiant!

"Oh, Dickie!" she cried. "I'm so glad you've come back. I've been so lonesome for you — Why, Dickie! what's the matter! You look ill, Dickie!"

"I don't understand," he muttered, staring at her.

"Don't understand what?"

"You're not ill— You're not—"

Her mother's voice broke in.

"It's quite plain he's been drowning his sorrows in drink!" she said, and swept out of the room.

Elsie hovered over him anxiously.

"Sit down, dear, and tell me what's the matter."

He stared at her incredulously. Then he looked around the room as though to strengthen his grip on reality. He had made some tremendous mistake. Yet he had read it—there could be no doubt of that—he had seen it—with his own eyes. . . .

"What's happened?" he asked weakly.

"Why nothing's happened. Just mother's been here. And—oh, yes!—a lady in the hotel tried to commit suicide. A Mrs. Marvin. Fancy! Curious, the name! She's better though, the poor dear. They say she'd been drinking. Isn't that terrible! I've been so lonesome for you, dear. I'm sorry I sent for mother. But I was *so* unhappy . . ."

"For Heaven's sake," said Marvin, "get me a drink, will you?"

"What do you want, dear?"

"Whiskey. Straight."

"But you never drink that, dear!"

"I'll drink it this time if you don't mind."

She looked at him queerly and went to order the drink through the tube. Marvin stared out of the window at the sea.

"What a fool I've been," he said to himself. "To think that Elsie—poor, weak, bungling Elsie—could be capable of committing suicide!"

She returned with the drink, chattering aimlessly. He swallowed it at a gulp.

"What *is* the matter, dear?" she said anxiously. "Have you really felt it so badly—our little separation?"

"Yes," he said grimly, "it nearly killed me!"

"Oh, darling," she cried, "you must promise never to let it happen again."

He must promise! After all he'd been through. Wasn't that just like Elsie!

A few minutes later, because he really felt the need of air, he allowed her to persuade him into going out for a chair-ride. He sat beside her without speaking, feeling strangely exhausted. Suddenly he started.

"By George!" he exclaimed.

"What is it?" she asked, startled.

"Nothing, dear," he replied sweetly. "I thought of a business letter I'd forgotten to write, that's all."

She rested back in the chair, satisfied, while he gritted his teeth and fumed to himself over his suddenly remembered appointment with Fay Taylor, that very afternoon, in New York. . . .

UNFREED

By Margaret Widdemer

I WISH I did not know
Heartbreak, nor anything
But how the young leaves blow
And bud in spring—

I wish that when the wind
Blew wild against my hair
My heart, let free, could find
Its freshness fair—

I wish when these sweet days
Turn sweeter all the while
I could forget your ways,
Forget your smile!

IT is not that women are fickle. It is merely that men follow each other in such quick succession.

OF women, many are cold but few are frozen.

WOMEN I HAVE NEVER MET

By L. de Salis Schultz

THE women who, knowing *how* to kiss, knew also *when*.

The woman who once having kissed, did not expect you to remember it five years later.

The woman who never tried to resuscitate a dead love.

The woman who by choice would not be a blonde.

The woman who does not like to think of her husband as a possible, if not actual, Don Juan.

The woman who could understand your falling in love with her best friend.

WITCHGRASS

By Edward J. O'Brien

WITCHGRASS plucking at the sky
In the golden heat,
Thy fingers circle round my heart
Where earth and heaven meet.

Wilder than all driven rain,
Clinging to the earth
Till the granite fall to dust
In soft veinéd mirth.

Gentler than the crumbling dusk
Over ancient lands,
Time shall wither ere the sky
Forget thy laughing hands.

A WOMAN is just as pleased by the compliment she fishes for as by the one she receives for merit.

MARRIAGE is the prologue to many a romantic divorce.

I TELL YOU A FAIRY TALE

By George O'Neil

IN the garden of the pale, slender Princess there were lovely flowers of many kinds. There were straight, high tulips that lined the rigid pathways with all the colours that are vivid in the rainbow; there were roses just flushing with the light of new buds; there were bushes weighted heavily with the splendid purple of lilacs and there were star-like forget-me-nots under the leaves, and pansies, and the petals of fruit blossoms that had been falling for a week, covering the silk grass with satin snow. Innumerable varieties of flowers grew there in the princess' garden; but one that she had never seen before was radiantly lovely in the corner that the white peacock loved.

The little princess knew a way to elude the old nurse who bothered her all the day with a too fine care and a solicitude not delicate. Not until tea-time could she manage her escape from the watchfulness of the old lady, but then was when the garden was loveliest—at dusk, when the low arrows of the sun shot gold into the shadows; when all the flowers brooded and the white peacock spoke so unhappily. . . . Then the princess would say to her nurse that one of the footmen had told her that for tea, that day, they were going to have truffles. The old lady forgot everything when you spoke of truffles; she went into a trance of anticipation — the princess knew the charm, for she had once seen her nurse eating a truffle. Perhaps the truffles never came, but that made no difference; if the princess *said* the truffles were coming the old nurse forgot her duty and the little princess would go unseen into the garden. Once she was safely through the long back corridor that led from the staircase tower she knew she would be undisturbed—until after tea-time.

This day, smiling to herself over the trick she had played on "the owl" (so she called her nurse), the slender, pale princess moved as softly as a moon shadow down the curling stairway to her beloved garden; she smiled, for she thought that to-night there really were going to be truffles, so she would have an extra minute by the wonderful flower near the peacock. She had never seen what the silver of a mist could do to the beauty of her rare flower. As the princess passed through the long corridor the thought came to her, "What if the goldflower had died!" and she quickened her pace in dread of such a calamity.

Swiftly she fluttered past the rose-vines, only stretching a small white hand to touch their crimson softness; but the roses were happy, for they thought the light thing that brushed them was a butterfly come to stay the night. Hurrying, her little feet flashed by the forget-me-nots and they, too, were glad, mistaking her white slippers for twinkling stars. Her curls brushed the lilacs and her ribbons floated over the tall tulips as she sped like a bird to the peacock's corner where the precious goldflower grew.

She exclaimed with relief, for there it was, beautiful as ever, although it had been in blossom, now, for at least ten days. Its three petals of curled gold still crowned the marvellously slim high stem; the pointed thin leaves still leaned about it like strange dreams, and

there was that undefined shadow that the light quivered around. The stately white peacock, with the ringed talons, loved it, too, as much as ever; for although he moved a little, over to the fountain edge, he watched the princess near the goldflower as closely as he had done each dusktime when she had come to sit there; and he was very still, only half-crying, every few minutes, softly, in that queer, unhappy way.

The little princess made many fancies for herself about the flower and the peacock. Old loves, they were, she sometimes thought, transformed by an ogre who envied them their hearts. That was the story the princess liked best to dream of her flower, but she made many others, sitting there in the soft light as the late voices of the day rose distantly on the far blue hills.

To-night, as she was just finding a new dream, suddenly, overhead, the grey willow sighed. The little princess was startled. She had said many times that willows whispered, but she hadn't meant, really, that they said things! And although this one had not spoken, nevertheless that was a true sigh that she had heard. She looked up into the darkness among the long leaves, thinking that perhaps an unhappy swallow was there—it might be birds could sigh that way. But only the moving tendrils and the dark boughs were visible. The little princess laughed.

"How real that sounded!" she said aloud.

And then the willow began to whisper and say things!

"Things that seem real *are* real," the willow said quite plainly.

The princess was too greatly amazed to move, and the willow went on whispering.

"What you *think* is the truth is the truth; no matter *what* you think."

This didn't sound like profound wisdom to the princess, but still she did not move.

"A wish is the realest thing in the world," whispered the willow tree.

Now the little princess stirred and turned to look at the peacock.

On the bird's white feathers the first light of the moon shimmered.

"Yes," the willow whispered.

This apparently irrelevant word made the princess jump, for it came as an answer to a question in her heart. Slowly, hesitating before each word, she began to speak, more to herself than to the willow tree.

"The goldflower—that the peacock loves," she said, "I love, too."

"And you wish . . ." the tree answered.

"That I . . ."

Here the peacock frightened the little princess to silence by crying much louder than she had ever heard him cry before. But the willow continued to speak when silence fell again.

"You wish for the goldflower."

"Yes," the little princess scarcely breathed.

"And you know the story of the goldflower?" the tree asked, as a light wind moved its long leaves.

"About the peacock, you mean?" the princess said.

"Ah, you are wise!" Now the willow seemed to laugh softly.

"I didn't know it was true!" the little princess exclaimed in an awed tone.

"But you do wish for the goldflower?" the willow tree asked again.

And again the little princess scarcely breathed her answer.

"Yes."

"Then," said the tree, "take it."

"Oh!" A quick sigh now broke from the princess' heart.

"Take it," the tree said again.

"But—I am afraid . . ." the princess said quite softly.

"If you wish it, take."

The willow seemed to laugh once more.

The slender, pale princess did not turn to look at the white peacock now. Instead, she bent close to the marvellously slim stem of the three-petaled goldflower, and as her trembling little fingers reached towards it perhaps the goldflower, like the roses, mistook her

hand for a butterfly, for its heavy crown swayed forward in the leaves and touched her delicate skin.

With a cry of joy she broke the flower from its stem and not looking at the willow or the peacock fled over the ways of the garden into the palace door. Just as she was half up the curling stairs in the tower the cry of the peacock arose on the dusk air. Never had the princess heard a sound so mournful, but she hurried on, happy, with the goldflower quivering in her fingers.

II

QUICKLY to her room the princess went and without waiting for the old nurse to find her she undressed, holding always in one hand the precious flower. Undoing her hair, she stood before the long mirror and smiled as she noticed that the gold of the flower which she held was really little brighter than her own curls. The princess did not know that this was a sign that some charm had begun to work. At last, in her heavy white nightgown, she climbed up onto the great richly draped bed. With the goldflower lightly pressed against her lips she hastened into dreams, and as she slept she smiled.

Perhaps the little princess dreamed of a tall prince in gold and of a queen who was sad because the prince confessed he no longer loved her; or perhaps she dreamed of a star or only a flower; but she was happy, for she smiled.

The princess was happy in dreams for many minutes, or it may have been hours. The old nurse had come in, frantic with fear, searching for her, and when she had found the princess safely in bed she had gone scolding under her breath to the kitchen and more truffles.

It is tragic that there were truffles for tea at the palace that night, for if it had not been so the end of this story might not have been such a sad one. But there *were* truffles and the nurse deserted the little princess to return to them.

It was just as the truffles gave out and the old nurse decided to forsake the below stairs gossip and return to her post at the bedside of the princess that the strange tumult began in the garden. The peacock wailed and a weird echo of his call awakened somewhere in the sky. The servants, led by the old nurse, rushed out to discover the reason for the unusual sounds.

"Glory to heaven!" the old nurse cried out, "the peacock!"

They all looked, and high in the sky they saw the white peacock spreading his great wings and curving like a silver arrow towards the stars. Clutched in his talons there was something that glistened in the rays of the moon—a dazzling gold.

Someone said, "The princess is calling." And the nurse ran to the great bedroom. There she fainted with fear, for the slender, pale princess was no longer upon the richly draped bed. In the middle of the white silk pillow where the head of the princess should have been there was a three-petaled flower on a marvellously slim stem . . . and the flower was whiter and more colourless than snow!

One of the old footmen said.

"There is a sound like laughter in the garden."

But he was very old and very superstitious.

The youngest footman said,

"It is only the wind in the willow tree."

MUSIC AS A MORAL FORCE

By Frank La Forrest

WHEN he decided to take up music he spent a long time choosing an instrument. He rejected the piano, harp, viola, bassoon, trombone, bass drum and 'cello one after the other as not suiting his purpose. He finally decided on the banjo. The banjo, in a pinch, can be swung with great effectiveness.

DIRGE

By George Sterling

From "Lilith."

O LAY her gently where the lark is nesting
And wingéd things are glad!
Tears end, and now begins the time of resting
For her whose heart was sad.

Bring roses, but a fairer bloom is taken.
Strew lilies—she was one,
Gone in her silence to a place forsaken
By roses and the sun.

Deep is her slumber at the last of sorrow,
Of twilight and the rain.
Her eyes have closed forever on to-morrow
And on to-morrow's pain.

A BANKER, A POET, AND A WOMAN

By Jorge Godoy

SAID the Banker:

"Be mine and you will dwell in a palatial mansion surrounded by wealth, luxury and comfort. The most wonderful and beautiful things of life will be at your disposal; in short, you will possess everything, absolutely everything, that money can buy."

Said the Poet:

"Be mine and we will kneel forever at the Sacred Temple of the Goddess Passion. Your rare charms will make me a genius, and your kissses will transport my enamoured soul to the heavens of ecstasy divine and sublime inspiration, and our life will be one long, sweet, never-ending dream of happiness and love."

Said the Woman:

"Wait until my husband dies and I'll think it over."

THE HYPOCRITE

By William Drayham

I

HE was a slightly panicky man, short, almost bald and with the look of a melancholy imbecile. The look, like everything else about him, was a lie. He was, as a matter of fact, full of a quiet, hideous joy. It was the curious maddening joy of an imbecile in his imbecility, the mysterious and revolting delight of the idiot in his idiocy, of an illiterate and stupid nincompoop in his miserable mental and spiritual shortcomings.

This jaundice-coloured drooling-minded creature, this unctuous little dolt of a human, contemplated life with the seraphic content of a monocell basking in the paleozoic ooze. He moved in the streets like some master cockalorum of ceremonies. A creature untroubled by doubts, immune to criticism, intelligent attack, vituperative insult, he paraded his paunch from day to day with the grateful poise of one who has achieved unimpeachable perfection.

He had the stubby, slippery-looking fingers of a man of strident and cowardly tempers. His hands were of a scaly glossiness—a fine, repellent texture that suggested the bellies of crustaceans and the eyeballs of birds. Incapable and absurd little hands they were, with a pudgy feminism about them. Brittle skinned and moist palmed with the wrists of a plump and pious spinster, they were continually active, continually straightening out things on his desk, placing a ruler so, a sheet of paper so, and a pen at right angles to an ink stand and a box of rubber bands exactly in the corner of a drawer.

More than any other thing about him I regarded his hands as the soul of the man. To watch them fluttering about, to stare at their unnaturally flattened nails, to contemplate their puerile efficiencies, their methodical little struttings as they adjusted papers and pens and envelopes was to peer into the despicable shallows of the creature's nature and to understand at a glance the insufferable depths of his vanity.

He walked on the balls of his feet with a peculiar bouncing gait that gave to his slightest movement a smug and unbearable rhythm. Here again in his walk the character of the man shone forth. It was the rhythm of a nature superbly at peace with itself—the physical gesture of a soul magnificently satiated with the sense of its own superworth. It was the walk of one firm in the convictions that men not blessed in infancy are denied the glorious favour of heaven after death, that all beliefs and thought contrary to the puerilities native to his own dormant brain are the ridiculous fallacies of evil. The alert waddle of a well-fed goose returning to its pond was in this walk of his, the tolerant strut of a conqueror glutted with tribute.

Rising from his desk he stood first on one foot and then the other, kicking out his short pudgy legs with quick little gestures to shake down and adjust his baggy trousers. Then, lifting his chin in the manner of one shrewdly surveying his destination, he set out, his face remaining authoritatively raised, his eyes travelling ahead with the inquisitive search of a petulant schoolmaster bent upon righteous reprimand. This seeming preoccupation gave him the look of melancholy—a mysterious

and disparaging melancholy. But, as I have said, it was a lie. He was a creature incapable of any such delicate abnegation as melancholy. The expression was the ludicrous accident of a man intent upon dignities beyond his puerile intelligence, the pathetic grotesquerie of a man performing trifling tasks with the pompous mannerisms of one engaged in powerful enterprise.

His features, all somewhat undersized, added a pugnacious air to the general carriage. His straight and chubby nose proclaimed belligerent virtues. Tilted by the raising of his face it seemed to be sniffing the good from the bad and gave to his very manner of breathing an alert infallibility, a profound consciousness of some mysterious importance. His lips were drawn into the inviolable line of a man incapable of moods, of a creature of firm and dominating emotions. They duplicated the smugness of his walk. They repeated the inane struttings of his hand. They supplemented the unbearable and meaningless precision of his body gestures. They seemed forever poised for the utterance of a whining indignation.

His voice, a trifle high pitched, was marked by a note of querulous venom. When he spoke it was the aggrieved air of a man over patient toward his inferiors. His laugh invariably pointed the triumph of some exuberant pettiness. Assailed by indisputable proof of a particular error, his laugh became a conciliatory and at the same time disparaging sneer of mirth. Disarmingly offensive, a sort of Christian coquetry with evil, it was his reply to overwhelming argument or direct insult. His head moved from side to side. His hands occupied themselves busily about his desk. He kicked out his legs, if he was standing, with abrupt business-like gestures. And he laughed, voicing in his mirth a seeming, cowardly eagerness to please. Yet under his laugh, under the awkward fellowship of his manner while laughing, lurked always the note of contemptuous malice.

So much for the physical exterior of the man—a strutting, little, panicky, hand-rubbing, chortling imbecile. It was the air of him, the knowledge and intuition I continually got of him, that most aroused my murderous thoughts. It was the fact that this absurd little numskull fancied himself of a profound intellectual reach, the fact that this undersized thimble-brained atom of a human believed with a quiet, radiant faith that he was a creature of Napoleonic mental dimensions, that most stirred the disgust in me. It was the vision of this pompous little waddling, chubby-faced stub of a moron proclaiming hourly to himself the superiority of his endowments, the vision of him congratulating himself heartily upon the intricate stupidity of his every thought, that made it impossible for me to so much as glance at him without a sensation of nausea.

My disgusts and indignations were not confined, however, to the moments of actual contact with him, although these moments were usually four hours each day for six days of the week. Away from him, away from the office we both occupied, the man remained in my thoughts like the memory of some obnoxious deed. The sound of his whining voice came to me as I closed my eyes to sleep, or the chubby features of him outlined themselves for me in all their insufferable detail of smugness as I turned on the light again to read.

At such times he became for me the hideous symbol of all I held contemptible in life. Despairing of ridding myself of him, I would lie in the dark reviling him in a desperate effort to tear from his eyes the veils which hid his pitiful stupidity from his knowledge. I would point out to him — the words rioting silently in my brain — how the God he worshipped was a compilation of his own picayune vanities, virtues and smugnesses; how his ideas of women, men, virtue and sin were the rubber stamp platitudes imprinted on his brain in childhood; how he was, in fact, a loathsome hypocrite, despising that which was superior to him, branding that as evil which was beyond his ca-

pacities to assimilate; how his notions about literature and art were the half-witted droolings of a creature to whom beauty was a variety of unintelligible filth.

I would begin then to think upon his activities, upon the prohibition petition that he had successfully peddled among his acquaintances, upon the Sunday mornings in which he depraved a group of children by his biblical discourses in the parish Sunday school. Writhing under the uncontrollable hate these meditations aroused in me, I would concoct master-invective and curse myself into a state of fever. Eventually—after three years—I lost complete sight of the details of his personality. His name alone became enough to inflame me. The mere knowledge that he existed was sufficient to stir up in me all the venom in my nature. He became, indeed, a type to me, a type of all that was hypocritical and cowardly.

II

ALTOGETHER I knew him for five years. During that time we occupied adjoining desks. At the beginning of our acquaintance we had been in the habit of holding debates, gossiping aimlessly about life and people. It was this early experience which gave me my full insight into his insufferable vanity, which revealed to me the decay and the turpitude of the man.

Later our conversations grew less frequent. Toward the last two years we spoke but seldom to each other. I forced myself into ignoring him as completely as I could, into maintaining a contemptuous indifference to his very existence—this while my blood was boiling with the desire to murder him, my fingers itching with the ambition to throttle his self-sufficient neck. We met and exchanged polite greetings. We departed with polite farewells.

At times, however, the hatred for the man which marked most of my waking hours became almost too much to control. I would find myself glowering at him, the memory of the things I had spoken against him to myself crying for physical utterance.

He died in the fifth year of our acquaintance. He had been ill with pneumonia for three days. I received the news at my desk and a peculiar sensation of peace overcame me. I felt as if something clean had occurred, as if I had experienced a sudden purification. I was unable to work. The certainty that he would never appear again at this desk opposite me, that his unbearable walk and his insufferable hands and his whining voice were for ever gone from the earth filled me with an exultation too keen to permit of any other thought. I left the office earlier than usual and walked about in the streets, gloating, joyous. I rehearsed the many arguments we had had in the years past. The knowledge that I had hated him thoroughly and that he had been aware of it when he closed his eyes for the last time, that he had died conscious of the fact that despite his belief in himself I held him a ridiculous and pitiable hypocrite, and had frequently said as much—alas not frequently enough perhaps—exhilarated me beyond words.

For three days I lived in a state of peculiar delight. His dying, his vanishing stiff and cold into the earth, never to harass and darken the vision of his fellow-men again, remained a matter for subtle enthusiasm for me.

It was on the third day after his death that I received a letter from a legal firm.

I opened it casually enough and glanced at its contents with a perfunctory stare.

The name of the man I had hated leaped out of the typewritten script in an instant, however, and I fastened my attention to the writing.

It was a letter from an attorney informing me that Jerome Sanders who had died three days ago had left me his estate as a legacy. For several moments after digesting this fact my thoughts remained in a whirl. He had left his estate, made me his heir—the

man I loathed and detested above all things human and inhuman in the world—the man whose death had come to me as the gladdest things I had ever received! Here was a situation insanely ironic! The letter further requested me to call at the office of the legal firm representing the Sanders' estate.

I arrived at the office later in the day. In the intervening hours I had puzzled the thing out. It was undoubtedly the cowardly revenge this amazing imbecile had conceived on his death-bed—that of heaping coals of fire on my head. I laughed to myself at the idea.

For an hour I turned over in my thoughts the ludicrous pathos of the creature obeying the vengeful impulses of his stupid soul and assuring himself at the same time that he was behaving in the manner of a glorious Christian—a super cheek-turner. The psychology of his last will and testament was as obvious as were all of his stagnant mental turnings.

Perhaps he had died wealthy! This new phase of it excited me at once. If so—I laughed aloud, walking through the street toward the attorney's office. How natural for such a drooling, sentimental nature as his to fancy his revenge would leave me consumed with remorse, would darken my days with the knowledge of the way in which I had behaved toward him when alive!

I confronted myself truthfully with my emotions. They were frank and unmistakable. The idea of inheriting wealth alone elated me. The thought of inheriting the wealth of a man I had so thoroughly hated doubled this elation. And finally the knowledge that he had left me this wealth under the impression that it would be a coal of fire on my head and an everlasting thorn in my conscience became for me a situation of exquisite irony.

I presented myself at the attorney's office in a calm though somewhat curious state of mind.

I was beckoned into an interior chamber, and without much parley the will of Jerome Sanders was read to me.

I listened in a daze. When the attorney had finished he reached forward and shook my hand.

"The legal procedure will be entirely simple," he said. "Mr. Sanders was a man without family or kin, it is evident. You were his closest and only friend. The esteem in which he held you is evidenced in his will. Mr. Sanders was, it is evident, a very lonely man. He has rewarded you with the gratitude of a large heart for the many kindnesses you showed him during his life, for the understanding you offered him and the companionship."

The attorney cleared his throat. His voice became softer.

"It is always pathetic," he said, "a man dying without kin, leaving none behind to mourn or remember. It was because of this that he valued your friendship so highly, and rewarded it so handsomely. The estate in all is valued, I think, at $25,000."

The attorney pulled at his white and pointed little beard and sighed again.

"The necessary papers will be fixed up to-morrow," he resumed. "And if you will call at ten o'clock. There are a number of purely personal effects that I am sure you will wish to take possession of as early as possible. They are now in his rooms where he died."

III

WHEN I left the office, the daze in which I had listened to the reading of the man's will returned to me. Had he died insane? I remembered the date of the will—two and a half years ago. "My loving friend—my companion and business associate." The phrases of the damnable thing began to sing themselves in my thought. Was it the demoniacal sarcasm of a soul more venomous than even I had conceived him to be? . . . "whose courtesy and reserve have lightened the weary hours of my toil. . . ." The same sanctimonious phrasing as ever!

A hideous doubt passed through me. I walked on rapidly, cursing to myself. There had been a mistake . . . an aw-

ful, irreparable mistake. In his immeasurable stupidity the creature had mistaken, misjudged, misunderstood. It was still an irony but a grim and pathetic one. I his best friend, his only heir! A rage seized me at the presumption of the man. I thought back desperately upon the quarrels we had had. *None came to my mind.* There was no doubt of his sincerity any more in me!

". . . That he may find opportunity and leisure to develop the genius that is in him."

This last phrase of the horrible document pursued me through the day. It followed me into my sleep. A regret, a nauseating regret, sat itself upon my chest. My hate had been too subtle for him, too refined to penetrate his insufferable vanity.

Nevertheless I could not fall asleep.

THE WOODED PATH

By Margaret Widdemer

THE little wood path twisted,
Green and brown and gay,
Up a hill and down a hill,
Through a dew-wet way,

It slipped beneath the pine trees
Where the winds were sweet
Past golden rod and fever few
And fields of whispering wheat,

So far and wide it wandered,
So many a dusk-sweet way,
I thought the little wood-path
Was guiding me astray,

But oh, the little wood-path
It knew, it was wise—
It led me to your waiting arms,
To your lips, your eyes!

THE difference between a woman's friends and enemies is that the former have a better stock of gossip about her.

MOST married women are all that wives should be, though not always to their own husbands.

IF THEY WILL NOT HEAR ME

By Marguerite Wilkinson

IF they will not hear me, shall I sing another song
Louder yet, or longer, or livelier to-day?
Shall I steal a passion that my music may be strong?
Shall I steal a frolic that my music may be gay?

Thrushes sing their own song, over again and over;
Larks sing their own song wherever they may fly;
Robins sing their own song hopping in the clover
On my cool, wet lawn. Are they braver than I?

FRANKLY PROSE

By Muna Lee

I. Among the Grasses

WAS it so great a thing, the love
Sweeping my youth like storm?
Do the depths of the river remember
Last April's waves?

II. In the Woods

Thinking of me, he thinks
Of fire and storm.
Yet the anemones
Recognized their playfellow.

III. April Dusk

I would have such music as a foxglove might make—
Soft purple trumpets,
Soft purple trumpets.

THE RETURN

By S. N. Behrman

I

HE walked into the ferry-slip and stood in line with a dozen people —young men in duck trousers, carrying packages of candy under their arms; several old maids, their faces unlit by expectancy, going to take familiar Sunday dinner with relatives; a few married men. Fair, noticing the young men, smiled to himself a little.

"So they still come on Sunday mornings to see the girls with their candy!" he said to himself.

There seemed to him something comic in it: this endless processional of young men bearing candy. And yet here he was himself—coming back!

Then he found himself in front of the window and bought his ticket. Slowly he moved on through the gate and on to the broad, blunt bow of the huge ferry. A moment he looked over the edge of the water, oily-green near the crusted piles, dirty, chitinous film beyond. He remembered the colour perfectly. He had always found this discoloured water as acutely repellant to him as a bruise, and yet he remembered that he had, on his daily trips, always permitted himself to look over the rail and steal a look at it.

A curious sensation took hold of him and held him. He had walked to midway along the row of benches flanking the outside of the glass-enclosed smoking-room and had sat down. It came to him that he had always sat exactly there on the return trip. Going out, in the morning, it had been the other side. . . . And then he found himself in the grip of the feeling that he had never stopped doing this, that he had not been away for fifteen years, that he had not been away at all. The rent seams of his life seemed to join miraculously, in a moment, shutting out the tawny gulf between. It was suddenly as though he had never stopped doing just this — riding back and forth on the ferry, on the home trip sitting on this side, on the "out" trip, on the other.

Against this feeling he rebelled. It seemed to strip him of identity, to rob his existence of its justification. For it was precisely this that he had *not* done. He had obeyed the imperious call of his youth. He had refused to hem in his life between morning and evening trip on the ferry, between dull work-place and dull home. He had escaped! For fifteen years he had been free! He had wandered. He had tried things. He had lived!

And this, his return, was in no sense a capitulation. It was merely that he wanted to see Mary again—his daughter. When he left she was three. Now she was eighteen—grown. He wanted to talk to her, to see what she was like. And this young man of hers to whom she was engaged—he wanted to see what *he* was like. After all it was his right. He was Mary's father. . . .

But this sense that he had not been away, that he was merely making his customary journey home, persisted, and he could not drive it away. As the ferry glided out into the harbour and the huge buildings of lower New York drew away from him into the pearl-misted distance, he could not derive from the amazing, unreal spectacle any sense of its unreality. It communicated none of the thrills of a familiar phenomenon seen again after long absence in far places.

He had fancied that he would see things across a deepened perspective, that his life, whatever its cost, had enriched him. But now he felt himself curiously insensitive, unruffled: a man long habituated to a shuttered life, going home for the thousandth time on a ferry. This trip across the harbour seemed to join itself naturally to the last one fifteen years before; the interval, instead of being a vivid presence, was like a pale water-colour that for some time has been left standing in the rain. . . .

This it was that troubled him—that he could not summon his fifteen years of exile to speak to him with a warm, throbbing voice. He thought of the colourful places he had seen, the blue languor of Hawaii, the hard, steady flame of the Mexican summer, the deep-tinted majesty of the Rockies. He had seen nature when she was like a passionate, wilful woman bent on achieving a startling vesture. He tried to reanimate these scenes. But without avail. At the moment their impression was no more real than if they had been so many lithographs. When he focused his mind upon the years of his wandering, there crowded into it a succession of drab events in squalid towns, squabbles, mean odd jobs, unlovely dissipations. . . .

Was this the splendidness of his emancipation? He was coming back, not a gleaming athlete who has been breasting an iridescent sea, but rather like a tired plodder used to muddy roads. Mysteriously he could not evoke the alpine moments spent in wandering over high, clear places—it was the sediment of lowlier visions that persisted. He had thought to be able to face this moment of return with a sense of superiority, detachment. Surely in these fifteen years a good deal of life had unrolled itself before him. Yet where was it? The richest of his memories had suddenly deserted him. The years were like so many undifferentiated ridges which he had ascended and descended—as one goes back and forth on a ferry.

He felt quite unchanged—as though he were the same man he was when he had last crossed on this ferry, fifteen years before. He sat wondering at this as the ungainly crafts moved slowly over the dull water. . . .

Across his field of vision the Statue of Liberty floated and he watched it with the empty expression of a man staring at an oft-read advertisement in a street-car. . . .

II

THERE was nearly two hours of street-car riding to do before he would reach the remoter end of the Island where his wife and daughter lived. He found to his surprise that the route was unchanged: there had been protest among his townsfolk when he went away against the absurd circuit they had to take in order to reach the ferry, to go to town. Fair supposed they were still protesting. He remembered the time, when he was a boy, when there had been no street cars at all in his part of the Island. Then a trip to the city had been a day's journey.

This discovery of his that there had been no change in the car routes, that you took the same car at the same place and changed at the same place, the same number of times, came as a shock to him. It confirmed his feeling that the time which had elapsed since his departure was not an epochal gap in his life, but a brief interlude, without particular consequence. Had there been a change in the car system, were there new directions to be learned, the consciousness of absence would have been sharpened, an emphasis thrown on its mere duration.

After all fifteen years was a long time—a significant time! Fifteen years did not glide over you, like a week-end in the country. Fifteen years might alter and scarify.

But as he looked back he could remember nothing critical. Even the moment of leaving seemed, in retrospect, not a heart-burning escape, a breaking of weighty chains, but a cas-

ual leavetaking. . . . Perhaps, he reflected, this was because he had, in his absence, occasionally written to his wife, and, latterly, to his daughter. This made it seem more as if he were a dutiful husband, away on an enforced business journey.

On the ferry the sky had been overcast, but now, about ten o'clock, the sun burned away the haze and great patches of blue showed overhead. The first part of the journey was over high ground past neat cottages set in smooth, deep lawns with an occasional view of the Sound. Fair found himself saying as he passed these cottages:

"There's Kellogg's place. . . . Quimbey's. . . ."

And once:

"It's about time Henus painted his shack!"

He certainly knew this old island!

And why not? He had begun to work in the city when he was fifteen years old. There had been no car this way then and he used to get up at five in the morning and ride on a bicycle to Richmond, the nearest car-stop. At Richmond he would leave his wheel in old lady Mather's grocery and get it again when he came back in the evening.

There were two ways to get to his town. One was to go to Richmond, the biggest town on the island, and change there. The other was to ride as far as Bull's Head on the car and from there take a stage.

Obeying a sudden impulse, Fair decided to go to Bull's Head and walk it. The sun was out full now and a Sunday morning quiet made itself felt over the country-side. He remembered that the road from Bull's Head ran through some pleasant meadows and that there were several short cuts through the woods which would make attractive divagations. Besides he felt that he needed the walk to rouse him from the sluggish, matter-of-fact mood into which he had unaccountably fallen. He wanted to concentrate his thoughts on what he should say to his wife and daughter. He had not written to them that he was coming. His wife would be surprised, shocked. After all he could not wander in and drop into a chair as though he had only left the night before. . . .

He must gather together his thoughts, bring himself into consciousness of the momentousness of the occasion. He began to be sorry now that he had not forewarned them of his arrival.

Once he struck the road he felt better. The freedom of walking, the acid clarity of the air (it was a lovely day in October), the wide sweep of country visible on either side of the road, enlivened him.

After all why need he be timorous about his return? It wasn't as though he was in any way sorry for what he had done; even though his wandering had not yielded what he had sought he did not regret these fifteen years. His life with Mary had been intolerable; that was the simple truth. Their marriage had been a mistake, she had known that it would be a mistake. Yet she had wanted it because she had not dared to face the consequences of their love. . . . Well, he had married her. Her gay brightness had vanished and he found himself living in a house where every task was a burden, life a matter for complaint. No, he was not sorry. He could not even feel that he had done unfairly by Mary. He had kept her and his child quite as well as if he had stayed at home. Besides it had not been a question of right and of wrong: there had been nothing for him to do but to go and he had gone. . . .

He wondered whether he would find her changed much. The rasping querulousness of her letters and the fact that she had not permitted Mary to reply to his letters made him doubt. Still he wanted to return. His wanderings had yielded him all they could yield him. The coloured illusion of distance did not renew itself: he had learned that. He wanted to return. He wanted to look after this grown girl of his. He wanted to remain still a while, among familiar faces. . .

III

STILL it troubled him that he could not capture the sense that his return along this road marked a turning-point, the rounding sweep of a great curve in his life. Fifteen summers and fifteen winters had passed over these fields and had left them little changed. A new stile there, a new cottage here, some trees cut down, an occasional motor passing by. Yet why should he expect changes when he was himself so little changed. How little he had not suspected till this morning.

Still he felt it acutely that in this, his moment of greatest need, his adventure had somehow failed him. He had no sustaining memories. Nothing abided of these fifteen years to give him the grip on this homecoming that he desired. He had gone away because something had cried within him that life had a deeper significance if only he would seek, that he had only to rend a tenuous film and the shining secret would be revealed. It seemed incredible to him that because of the quick heedlessness of his youth he would be tied for ever to the dull grind of work which did not interest him, to a home and a town he disliked. . . .

He knew a strange, incoherent rebellion against the thought that this uneventful plodding might, after all, be his real destiny, a deep certainty that like itself, the real life, was something far other, a fabric of many colours, many sensations. . . . Something of what the young Shakespeare must have felt when he left his shrew at Oxford and turned his young face toward London. . . .

Was it that life had failed him or that he himself had failed? He was still young enough, full of zest enough, to believe that it was he, and not life, that had failed. He felt now as he had felt then, that he had somehow, subtly, missed the real, deeper meaning of things—that though he had brushed the veil he had not rent it! "There must be something more to it than this!" It was this affirmation that had driven him away, fifteen years before. And now, on his return, he found himself again saying it . . . the eternal mirage with which reality lures the romantic. . . .

Perhaps the secret, like the Grail which the Knight roamed the world to seek, was at home, in Mary's cottage. Whimsically he thought that even this might be true. Well, he would see! Perhaps Mary *had* changed. Perhaps she had found what he, in all his wanderings, had missed. And his daughter! He was consumed by a deep desire to see her, talk with her, know her. He had received a picture of her, a highly posed cabinet photograph in which she appeared in an attitude slightly theatrical—the rampant artistry of a country photographer. But even from the picture he had been able to see that Mary was not his wife's daughter but his own. He saw it in the modelling of the features, a certain sensitiveness about the nostrils. A slim child he fancied her, delicately coloured, subdued, with a low, soft voice and a shy laugh. . . .

What did she think of him, he wondered? What had her mother told her of him? Did she think, with the other townspeople, with his wife, that he was a contemptible blackguard?

He expected that. But he thought he could overcome it. He would try. With his wife he knew that friendship was for ever impossible. But he hoped to establish a decent compromise that would enable them to live together with a certain dignity. And, in time, he would win his daughter's affection. He would be able to help her, too.

After all he had seen things, knew things—in a desultory way perhaps, but he knew them. Yes, he ought to be able to help his daughter. And this young man she was engaged to—he wanted to size him up, too. Mary must not throw herself away! It would be pleasant—watching her mind unfold, as she listened to him talk, as she read the books he would buy for her. He would open an undreamt-of world for her—his daughter!

IV

When he was a few miles from the town he turned off from the main road into a path that led through the woods by a place known as Luke's Pond. As a child he used to take this path on the way from school and get in a swim in the Pond before going home. It was pleasant now to walk along in the cloistral dimness: the branches of the trees were so closely intertwined overhead that little sun peeped through—only a yellow-green light. Fair thought it was like having one's eyes open under water, that this was some submarine undergrowth into which, dreaming, he had stumbled.

In a few minutes he came to the edge of the Pond. It had shrunken. Where formerly the banks had been firm right up to the water's edge they were now muddy and tufted with rank growths. Fair skirted the Pond. He became suddenly impatient with his introspections.

"I'll go right up to the house," he said to himself.

He quickened his pace. But he stopped suddenly. A girl came from a branching path under the trees and began to walk in the same direction as he—almost in front of him. She had given him a quick look and their eyes had met for a moment. He knew that in that swift glance she had appraised his clothes, his bearing, his features, his age. It was the look, half inquiring, half provocative, that working girls in cities give men whom they pass on the avenues.

Fair stopped for a moment to still his quickened breathing. Then he advanced till he nearly brushed the girl's shoulder.

"Excuse me," he said. "But am I walking right? I want to get to Hunter's Ferry."

She looked at him keenly. But she smiled and answered civilly, convinced that the stranger's manner was sufficiently respectful.

"You'd better take the main road," she said.

"I've just left it. I remembered this short-cut, though I couldn't be sure—quite."

"This is all right—brings you out into Andersonville. Then you can take a stage through to Hunter's."

"That's what I thought."

He was conscious that she was watching him narrowly.

"You've been here before then?"

"Oh, yes. But it's—five years since the last time."

"Oh! Once in five years is about enough for this place!" she laughed.

"I have some folks at Hunter's Ferry," he said slowly. "Whenever I'm in the neighbourhood I come to see them."

"You travel?" There was a note of unconcealed eagerness in the girl's voice.

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Almost everywhere. Out West mostly. Mexico—"

"Like my father! My father travels. He goes to all those places. He's been to Hawaii and South America, too. That isn't where I'd go though—!"

"No?"

He looked at her, a smile playing about the corners of his mouth. She caught the smile and smiled in return.

He observed her costume. She was dressed in the exaggerated, copied mode affected by shop-girls on their holidays, her stockings were of the sheerest silk and her patent-leather slippers miraculously heeled. Such clothes, in the woods, struck Fair with an almost painful incongruity. Her hair, piled high on her head, was intricately coiffed. She was pretty: her profile was delicately, if a bit sharply, modelled, and her mouth and nostrils were sensitive, but she was not the reticent, shy child he had pictured. She had a disquieting urban assurance, a too-easy sophistication. It was incredible to Fair that this highly confident young lady was the daughter of a woman who had herself been born and brought up in a town where even now the steam-cars did not enter.

"Of course she works in the city," Fair said to himself.

"Where would you like to go if you travelled?" he repeated.

"Cities. Not out into the deserts where there are no hotels and theatres. I've had enough of the country right here in Andersonville."

"You like the town?"

"Crazy about it. I'm going to live in New York.'

He looked at the diamond glittering on her finger.

"When you get married?"

She laughed.

"You're very observing." She held up the ring for inspection. "Like it?"

He looked at the huge stone in its gaudy setting.

"It's beautiful," he said as warmly as he could.

"Are you acquainted in Andersonville?" she asked after a moment.

"I used to be—a little. But I haven't been here much in the last ten years."

"I'm Mary Fair," she said. "Know us?"

She laughed at her own directness. Fair noticed that she laughed frequently, often for no particular reason.

"Fair," he repeated. "It seems to me I do remember the name."

"Perhaps you knew my dad. He left town when I was a kid."

"And he hasn't been back to see you?"

"No," she said indifferently. "Old boy couldn't stand Andersonville, I guess. Can't say I blame him much. It is the *deadest* place—I could scream sometimes—!"

She laughed her staccato, high-pitched laugh with a quick side-look at him for appreciation.

But this time he did not smile at her. He felt a sharp pang at her levity. He had half expected her to show anger or contempt at his purposed reference to her father. Had this been her reaction he might even have attempted a defence and told her who he was. But her words had hurt him deeply. . . . It was so evident that he had never existed for her as an individual, that her imagination had been in no way touched by his absence, his continued wandering, the half-wistful endearments with which he had filled his few letters to her, the letters which his wife had not permitted her to answer. He was rather glad now that she had not answered. . . .

He walked on in silence, his head bowed, his mind full of painful thoughts.

"What's on your mind?" she asked suddenly.

"Nothing," he said, "much—"

"That's *my* trouble," she informed him.

"What does your fiancée do?" he asked.

"*He's* from Hunter's Ferry! Maybe you know him. Billy May."

He shook his head.

"I don't know him," he said.

"My, but you're well acquainted, aren't you!"

He smiled to show her he appreciated her joke.

"I know very few," he said.

"You don't miss much," she said consolingly. "I don't think you could find a crowd of fossils like here anywhere in the world. It's *awful!* Why, you know there's people right here in Andersonville who've never been to Richmond! Twenty-cent fare. It's a fact. And if you mentioned New York to 'em you'd think you were proposing the Grand Tour!"

He did not join in her laughter.

"But you get around, don't you?"

"As much as I can. I work in town. So does Billy. He's got a great job. We're going to live there."

"How about your mother?" he asked after a moment.

"Oh, she'll stay on here. Couldn't get her away with a derrick. She's like all the rest. . . ."

V

THEY walked on in silence. . . . An overpowering desire came over him to reach out his arms and touch her and say: "I am your father."

He found himself staring at her and he saw the uncomprehending look with which she met his gaze. He stopped short in his walk, feeling himself suddenly unable to go on. . . . He still looked at her. Would she know?

But evidently she misunderstood him, for she laughed nervously and said:

"I guess I'd better go back to the main road now. I've got to meet Billy, and he's awful jealous!"

"All right," he said. "I'll walk on through here."

"All right. Glad to have met you—" She turned a bit reluctantly.

"Thank you. Good-bye."

He wanted, painfully, to tell her who he was, to have her know. But he watched her turn and disappear up a divergent by-path. Before he lost sight of her she looked around, smiled brightly at him and waved her hand. He stood watching her, unable to respond to her greeting.

He sat down under a tree and wiped his forehead with his handkerchief. It was better that he had not spoken. It was too late. What could he do now? Her life was settled, arranged. He could only disquiet her. What right had he to come back, to want to change her?

He sat a long time under the tree, thinking. Then, unconsciously, he got up and followed the path taken by his daughter. In a few minutes he was on the main road. Without knowing why he walked along toward the village.

In a little while he was almost in sight of it—saw the Lutheran Church and, a little farther down, the Moravian, built in the time of Queen Anne. He walked very slowly. Two old women passed him. They looked at him and he felt a sudden trembling lest they recognize him. But they did not. And he himself could not recall their names, though he knew that he knew them. When he had left the village, fifteen years before, they had still been youthful. Now they were unbelievably old, with bent backs and wrinkled faces and a patient, half-frightened, tragic look in their eyes. This was what his wife—the girl Mary—would become. In the lives of these two women a trip to Richmond, a few miles away, loomed with the formidableness of a journey. These two old ladies had probably never been to New York in their lives. The endless little peregrinations up and down the bleak road was their pitiful Odyssey. . . .

If he waited here by the roadside he knew that he would see his wife walking up the road, stop and turn and go back. In the figures of the two old ladies was epitomized for him her whole life during these fifteen years. As he thought of Mary walking up and down this road with empty, patient eyes a great pity for her welled up in him. It was the first time he had ever felt for her an emotion so deep and tender. . . . So this was all that had happened in fifteen years?

And he—? What had he become? That was the question he asked himself as, with a last look down the village street, he turned and walked again up the road over which he had come. . . .

INTUITION is the feminine faculty of instantly picking out a rival's weak points.

WOMEN like to pretend they are débutantes in the world of love.

WHOMSOEVER CLARICE SMILES UPON

By John Hamilton

I

WHEN John married Clarice I envied him. Clarice was entrancingly blonde with long slanting eyes and dimpled cheeks and a slim waist. She had slender shoulders that I longed to encircle with my arms, and full red lips that I craved to kiss. . . .

Clarice smiled at me.

II

AFTER the divorce, Clarice married me. When Clarice became angry she would tear at me with her pointed finger-nails and call me whatever was vile. Clarice was untidy in her boudoir. Clarice flirted openly with other men. John looked prosperous and happy. I envied John. . . .

Clarice smiled at John.

III

AFTER the divorce, Clarice remarried John. I forgot her violent temper, her disorderliness and her fickleness. I remembered her saucy dimples and the gleam of her white teeth as she dug them into my arm and her slim ankles and her kisses . . . I envied John.

IV

I ENVY John. The other day John died. . . .

Clarice has smiled at me. . .

MAGIC

By Leslie Nelson Jennings

YOU were busy with innumerable things—
Colour of leaf and stone; you watched the way
Noon minted gold, and how the shadows lay
Along the hilltops, brushing lacy wings.
You said: It is just like drinking yellow wine
In a clear goblet. I can feel the sun
Mount to my brain, and all this beauty run
Like keen flame through me, aching-sweet and fine. . . .

An eagle drew across the dazzling page
Of blue remoteness his invisible arc.
And you were thinking, perhaps, how birds were wise
Before we came to claim our heritage. . . .
You turned to me—but all the world grew dark,
And I could only look into your eyes.

MAN AND WIFE

By L. M. Hussey

I

THEY were married at last—and after the end of a five-year wait. It was not that he had been anything of a difficult fish to land. Anne laughed agreeably to herself when she sensed that people might have thought that, all along. She had been certain of him after the first month. But the interminable five years were the cost of his idealism.

"My darling," he said, "I must not marry you until I can give you a home at least little worthy of you."

She knew it would be an immense mistake to decrease her worthiness by any serious protest. So she persisted in the virginal aloofness that he adored. With complacency she watched the tepidities of her response engauded by his reverent praise, seeing them in the dress of virtues: her maidenly reserve, her delicacy, her modesty. That was the sort of woman he could love and, fortunately, it was the sort of woman she could easiest be. Five years—the price—was a long time, but that was behind her now. They were married and she sat with nothing to do, a book in her lap, waiting for him to come home.

She heard the brisk sound of his step in the hall. He was punctual, and knowing him so long, intimately versed in his ways, she could imagine him no otherwise. The routine of his movements seemed almost a temporal function of the day, a part of the seasons and tides, a minor satellite of the unvarying sun.

She stood up, and laying her book on the chair, crossed the room languorously to meet him. A moment before she reached the door he came through it, and as he confronted her his eyes grew wider with the evening pleasure of finding her there, in the intimacy of their own home, ready to greet him. He took her hands, bending over her face, and kissed her.

"Little dear," he murmured.

"Henry, I'm glad you're home," she responded.

Retaining one of her hands, he drew her back through the room to the chair from which she had just come. He waited until she had sat down, and then pulled another chair close and seated himself. She gave him her unvarying smile.

As he talked to her he delighted his eyes with looking at her, as if she were a lovely picture, the fine piece of a master, precious for its almost unfathomable and heavenly skill, yet warm and intimate, because possessed. His eyes moved over her palely aurine hair, her white face, her curved small chin, throwing a short shadow on her throat that emerged nacreously pallid below, almost melting out of the shadow, and cut off at last by the V of her dress. Her blue eyes looked into his own with a moving confidence, a trust, virginal and touching. It was almost difficult to speak to her of the commonplaces of his day, she was so much a white and delicate thing.

"I had luncheon to-day," he was telling her, "with someone I hadn't seen for a long time."

"Someone I know?"

"No; you never met him. My cousin—Albert; you remember? I have

spoken of him. The one who has not been East for several years?"

She nodded.

He frowned a little, then looking at her, smiled again.

"I don't like such men," he said. "Albert annoyed me. Sometimes I feel that even a family tie doesn't justify me in knowing such a person."

She knew he would go on. She waited, keeping her face turned toward him, and the little smile curved on her lips. This was a part of the necessity of their married relation, a duty that she accepted indifferently. He imagined her engrossed in all the activities through which he moved in the day away from her. It was not difficult to make him think so. A superficial attentiveness satisfied him, and her thoughts were free.

Just now, probably because it was near supper-time, she was thinking of food. Very idly her mind dwelt on many edible things, considering this and that for a moment and wondering about dishes she had never tasted. Her husband was speaking to her again.

"I wish he could meet *you!*"

"Why would I want to meet him?"

"You probably wouldn't: I was thinking about Albert. It would do him good. . . . You don't know anything about the sort of man Albert is. He spent the whole luncheon hour telling me of women he had known, and those he knew. Really, they weren't respectable stories. He imagines every women he meets is ready to have some sort of an affair with him. A most irritating sort of a fellow, Albert is."

"But what have I to do with him?"

He laughed complacently.

"What I meant was, that if Albert could meet you, he'd be taken down a peg or two. I'd just like to be able to show him that there's a different world from the one he lives in, with different women."

Anne turned her thoughts from some things she had eaten in a restaurant some weeks before to this cousin that Henry was talking about. She fancied a languid little picture of her husband taking lunch with Albert, the cousin, whilst he listened, outraged, but not entirely uninterested, she imagined, to the sort of tales that had passed over the table. An ephemeral melancholy touched her spirit, like a flush appearing an instant and dying out; it had been a long time since she had heard a good story!

Then she felt a subdued amusement as the man beside her went on deprecating Albert. She knew his righteousness so intimately that it grew a little comic, like a suit of old clothes bagged at the knees and worn shiny on the elbow.

She gazed guilelessly into his eyes and questioned him.

"Well, why don't you ask your Cousin Albert here?" she said. "I mean, I think we ought to do it, don't you? He must be lonely in a place where he doesn't know anybody."

"Oh—I'm not so sure about Albert being lonely. But it might be that I ought to invite him some evening. It would do him good!"

II

PRESENTLY they went out to dinner, and the cousin was no longer a part of the conversation. Henry served his wife with grave seriousness and then as he ate, enjoyed this evening rite of seeing her near him, a presence delicate, of white and gold, luminous and precious under a dome of yellow light.

Unconsciously with her he indulged his only pagan moods, for essentially he approached her with the scented and mystic intimacy, yet abasement, of a heathen to his idol. The minutiæ of her movements engrossed him as if they were phenomena momentous and oracular, from which might come the interpreted knowledge of human destinies and notable dooms: the play of her white fingers, the small expressions on her face, the tilt of her head, the lights in her eyes.

In a measure, Anne sensed the quality of his homage. She accepted it with resignation, without emotion, save only

an occasional flicker of contempt. Her indifference enhanced the white aloofness of her.

Since they had not spoken of him again, she forgot all about Henry's cousin; for a moment she was surprised when her husband telephoned her the following day that he was bringing Albert home to dinner. After that, she was pleased. She remembered the sort of man Albert had been represented to be, and so he interested her; the thoughts of him brought out her placid curiosity.

Again, the amusing picture of his cousin debauching Henry with the tales of his conquests lingered in her fancy and as she dressed for dinner a soft laugh broke over her lips. A compassionate tenderness for her husband hovered in her spirit, like a warm, unusual ghost; she experienced a maternal pity in the consciousness of his *naïveté*.

She was still in her room when Henry entered the house with their guest. He came upstairs to find her, greeted her with his sentimental tenderness, and brought her down to meet Albert. She took Albert's hand and looked into his face with her trustful, wide eyes. He met her gaze fully, smiling at her.

She saw that he was a blond, tall, even debonair young man; a little younger than her husband. His blue eyes had a searching, appraising quality. He was wholly at his ease, and sank comfortably into a chair, conversing at once. Anne was pleased with him.

Her husband watched the meeting between Albert and his wife with a lofty satisfaction. He thought the white soul of Anne seemed almost corporate as she greeted this man, a visible and immaculate raiment.

When they went out to dinner he watched the two; all during the evening he spoke little, but took his pleasure in observing. Some of the proselytizing frenzy of the reformer grew in his veins. He was tempted to give Albert an oportunity to be alone with Anne, to engineer a meeting between them in some way, in order that Albert might suffer a chastening rebuff. The notion aroused him like an inspiration; he played with it again and again and gave it up only with reluctance.

During the evening, Anne and the cousin, conversing, watched each other with curiosity. He interested her; she wondered what he would say to her if they were alone together. She felt that a meeting of that kind would be an entertaining experience.

And he observed her with pleasure and surprise. This was not the sort of woman he had expected for Henry's wife. Henry was something of an ass. She was really good to look at; he admired the colour of her hair and her pale face, white and gold. Her lips were the redder for her pallor. She seemed interested in him.

Albert did not remain late. As Anne gave him her hand in taking leave of him she once more tilted her head and looked into his face with the profound unblemished trust of her blue, clear eyes. He met her eyes again, smiling.

When he had gone her husband sighed comfortably.

"Well, I did my duty," he said.

He touched Anne caressingly.

"I had him here; I was hospitable. I'm not sure that I'm glad, however. Albert is not the sort of a young man that should come into our home, Anne."

She was vacantly tucking up some escaped ends of her hair. She made no comment. Her interest seemed not quite so staunch this evening. But that was quickly explained.

"I'm awfully tired someway or other," she said. "I think I'll go right to bed."

Henry touched her arm tenderly.

"Poor little dear," he said. "You couldn't have been comfortable. It must have been a strain on you."

She received his kiss and then went up to her room. There she sat down before her mirror, staring into the glass. The yellow electric light gilded her white arms, burnished her gilt hair, laid a glow over her white face. She

rested her cheeks in her palms, looking into her own eyes in the mirror.

For a time her normal acquiescence, her almost stoic acceptance of the conditions of her existence, seemed to have been coloured with an insistent curiosity, a strangeness, a calm but steady questioning. In the trend of her thoughts, and the reactions of her mind, she felt herself remarkably alone and aloof. The rôle she enacted in her husband's idealism became almost ridiculous to her, a harlequinade, a grotesquery. She was none of the things he painted her; to his enthusiasms and his strange moralities she had never known a moment of response. That she had been in act a keeper of his code was only the accident of her living, the result of her lymphatic drifting, the absence in her of impulses to do and experience, the only channel into which those inscrutable currents of her destiny—her destiny accepted with neither joy nor opposition—had born her . . .

Like a mist these recognitions hung about her this evening.

And then the unusual quality of her mood departed; she was tired and sleepy. She leaned over and undid her slippers; she drew the silk straps of her gown from her white, sloping shoulders, not many minutes more and she was in bed.

III

THE next day the routine of her morning began with events in their customary sequence. Her husband kissed her at his leaving, taking his departure from her with the romantic air of a pious crusader venturing all in mail, her colours a plumage in his hat. She spent a languorous hour about her toilet; doing up her hair and observing the copper glints of it as she sat near the window, with the morning sunlight palely embracing her head and shoulders; rubbing a white cream into her cheeks until they softened and flushed under the deft manipulations of her slim fingers; polishing her long curved finger nails like a jeweller burnishing precious metals. Her mind was languidly inattentive, concerned alertly with nothing, as if it had achieved the initial stage at least of an oriental nirvana.

Later, she went below and read for a time a summer novel. From this she was called to the telephone.

It was the cousin's, Albert's, voice that spoke to her.

She was not surprised. His call seemed an expected event, for which she had been waiting. In that way she greeted him.

He responded to this note and met her intimacy with his own.

"I was wondering what you were doing to-day," he said.

"Nothing; I'm not busy."

"What were you planning for this afternoon?"

"I thought of a little shopping . . ."

"But that can be postponed? I'd like to come around in my car. We might take a drive somewhere."

Anne hesitated. His voice came to her again.

"Shall we say three o'clock?"

It occurred to her that it was senseless not to meet him. She knew that he would amuse her.

"I'll be ready," she said.

A moment after she had hung up the receiver she thought of her husband. She had a fancy of his consternation should he discover her expedition with Albert, and the notion made her merry; she smiled; she laughed a little—and then she experienced her former sense of tenderness, a softening whose quality was the commingled emotions of maternal solicitude, a brief pity, a faint contempt. She ceased to think of him then, and after she had luncheon she changed her frock and sat reading until Albert called for her.

She had not seen him before in the daylight; he was more ruddy and vital than her evening's memory of him. He was exuberantly alive, like a being freshly created. He met her with an immediate camaraderie, a strong pressure of his hand, and they went out of the house together, laughing. He helped

her into a green runabout standing at the curb and in a moment he was at the driver's wheel beside her. They left swiftly in an exultant clamour of the engine.

He drove the car out of the city and stopped it finally at a white road-house. He got out, was at the other side in an instant, and assisted her to step down. She went up the steps of the porch with her arm through his, and together they entered a dim, cool room and sat down at one of the tables. No one else was in the room. The pleasing sense of seclusion put a smile on Anne's lips.

A negro waiter came in to them; his easy grin seemed to merge with their holiday humour. He took their order and in a moment came back ceremonially with the drinks, placing one before Anne and one before Albert, with a flourish.

"When you want me again, suh, jus' ring the little bell," he said.

He retired and they were alone once more.

They touched their glasses together and drank.

"You're a surprise," said Albert.

"How do I surprise you?"

"You're not the woman I expected to meet. I mean, last night, when I came to dinner on Henry's invitation. He said he wanted me to know his wife. I like old Henry—but don't you think you're not quite the woman one would expect to find him marrying? I imagined him with some plain, dull little teacher out of his favourite Sunday-school."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"You can't judge a man's wife by the man," she said.

"No; he doesn't choose, does he?" Albert returned.

They both laughed.

"Don't you find it dull?" he asked.

"How?"

"Being married—to him?"

"No—I'm not bored."

"Henry hasn't grown frisky, has he?"

Anne shook her head from side to side, smiling faintly.

"He's not a gay one," she said.

"How do you spend your time? What do you do with your whole day?"

"What a question to answer! You don't imagine I have a programme, do you? The time passes. I assure you, I'm not especially bored."

"But wouldn't you rather be here with me? We're going to see a lot of each other, aren't we?"

"Perhaps—"

She was looking into his face with her slight, provoking smile. The shaded room threw a tenuous purple shadow over her features, like a mantle of imponderable colour. One slender hand, flexed and white, lay on the cloth, the other was curved about the stem of her glass. Albert stretched out his hand and let his fingers touch hers. She did not withdraw from his touch. He lifted her hand and drew her leaning toward him; he bent forward, brought his face close, and kissed her. She sat still looking at him, smiling.

He pondered the meaning of her curved lips; he endeavoured to fathom her thoughts, her reaction to these moments, the extent of her emotional response. Was the situation one common to her?

Anne looked at him as he watched her. She experienced a placidity, a calm, a content. Her thoughts were vague and she engaged nothing definitely. She enjoyed the flow of circumstances, to which she delivered herself not emotionally, with enthusiasm and abandon, but almost impersonally, inanimately, like a drift-piece borne along in the unfathomed current of a stream. This was her content: to yield herself almost fatalistically to the conditions of her destiny.

They went out at last and got into the car again. For an hour they drove through the open country. The wind separated wisps of Anne's hair, releasing them out of the coiled masses on her head as by the pluck of deft fingers; they drifted again and again against her cheeks and neck in impalpable blows, like touches from the unsub-

stantial hands of slim, shining ghosts. The fields passed behind them like green waters in noiseless motion.

Albert turned the car into a narrow road, descended an uneven declivity and stopped finally under a line of trees, heavy with aromatic foliage. The clamorous vibration of the engine ceased; it seemed now that this had been the only noise abroad on the summer afternoon, for the place became very still. Refractive waves of heat arose trembling from the green hood of the car.

They both stepped out and sat down in the grass at the side of the road. A beetle dropped from the branches over Anne's head, alighting on her dress like a minute glowing meteor. She swept the little animal into the grass; the man at her side captured her hand, put his arm about her, met her lips with his own.

Presently they noticed that the sun was lingering low; there was a stir in the leaves and a breeze was blowing down the road.

"We must get back," said Anne.

"I suppose so," he assented.

They reseated themselves in the car and with difficulty turned it about to regain the main road. Finally they were headed for the city again. For half an hour they travelled along swiftly, saying little to each other.

They had covered about half the returning distance when the car stopped, the noise of the engine ceasing abruptly.

Albert stared straight in front of him for a moment, and then jumped out.

He lifted up the side of the hood and peered in at the hot cylinders. He came back to the wheel and endeavoured to start the engine. There was no response.

He returned to the hood and tinkered with the sparking plugs. At last he removed each one and cleaned it. Anne watched him from the car. She was already uneasy: they were certain to be late. Then her uneasiness passed and her normal resignation, a yielding complacency, returned to her. She knew that Henry would be astonished at her absence. But she would make some explanation to him.

For more than an hour Albert's efforts were futile. Then he discovered a broken wire connecting with his magneto. He swore for a few seconds in an even voice, and at last mended it. The car started at once.

When they reached the city some of the street-lamps were lighted. Albert looked at the woman near him. He smiled regretfully.

"I'm sorry," he said.

"You couldn't help it."

"No, I suppose not. Will you take supper with me?"

"I don't think so. Poor Henry! You can stop soon and get me a taxi. I'll go on home."

They passed a hotel; he drew up at the curb and got out.

"I'll get your taxi here?" he said.

A driver responded to his hail; Albert helped her into the cab.

"When will we be together again?" he asked her.

"I don't know. . . ."

"Won't you set a time?"

"I don't like to plan. I'd rather have things happen. Call me up sometime."

He closed the door and the conveyance jerked away into the street. Anne leaned her head against the cushions, rather tired. In half an hour she was home.

IV

Her husband had been watching from the window. He opened the door for her as she came up the steps.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

He was immensely agitated; his hair was ruffled as if he had been running his fingers through it; his face was flushed and hot; his eyes were wide and round.

"Nothing's the matter," said Anne.

"Where have you been? I've been imagining all sorts of things!"

"Henry, you're very silly."

"You were always here before! What have you been doing, Anne?"

"Let me go up to my room," she said.

"I must slip on something else. I'm all hot and mussy."

She started toward the stairs. He looked after her a second, and then, running a few steps, secured her arm.

"Anne!" he cried. "You've explained nothing! What does it mean? You act very strangely!"

She looked into his reddened face a second, absurdly agitated; she turned her head away and released her arm from his clutch.

"I suppose you think I was out with Albert," she said.

This came from her lips suddenly, prompted by a malicious reaction to his profuse agitation.

She went up the stairs slowly, disappearing on the landing with an air of final parting.

He looked after her, emotions moving across his features almost in caricature, as if from the strokes of a painter, sketching. The words she had spoken throbbed in his ears, insistent, malign, revealing. She must have said the truth; a suspicion, burning and dreadful, became a conviction.

An impulse to rush after her was lost in a second urge to see the man himself. He turned in the hall and went out through the vestibule. The front door was still open. He passed through it, without closing it, and ran down the steps. He walked along the street hatless, staring in front of him.

A driver in an empty taxi saw him and called. Henry looked up and beckoned the fellow to the curb. He got in and gave the address of Albert's rooms.

His dislike of Albert, his disapproval of Albert, became a consuming rage, a rage that tightened the muscles of his face and neck, clenched his fingers into two close fists, locked the rows of his teeth in a grinding contact. Albert's smile, his blond hair, his caressing voice seemed near him, like a mocking ghost, there in the close interior of the cab. The vision enraged him. He glared out at the streets in order not to see it.

They stopped at the apartment-house where the man had his rooms. Henry found himself unable to go in and make the necessary inquiries. He put his head out of the door and spoke to the driver. He gave him Albert's name and told him to go in and bring that person out to the cab. He waited while the driver crossed the pavement and disappeared indoors. He waited for Albert, his hands opening and closing. He would not question him; he would pull him into the cab and strangle him without a word.

The driver returned, but he was alone.

"The gentleman's not in his rooms now, sir," he said.

Henry sat blankly for a moment, confronted with an event for which he had made no provision. He pondered the possibility of finding Albert. But he knew nothing of his movements. The driver waited for him to speak.

"Take me back," he said finally.

The tempest of his emotions subsided into a weary enervation. His volition seemed to have passed from him; he sat in the confined space with his hands hanging at his sides; the jolts of the vehicle threw him about unresistant. He was unaware when the machine stopped; the driver called to him from the opened door.

"Is this far enough, sir?" he asked.

"Yes," muttered Henry.

He extracted a bill from his pocket and gave it to the man; he walked off without further waiting.

He came to his house. Someone had closed the door. He opened it and went in. No one was in the hall. Upstairs he could hear the tread of his wife, moving about in her room. He climbed the stairs to go to her; he passed through the corridor and knocked at her door.

"Come in," he heard her say.

Henry opened the door. She was standing near her dressing-table looking at him. She had put on a white frock that fell about her like a robe of light. Her head was tilted back, her gold hair glittered with a pallid loveliness.

He looked at her white face, the line of her red, gentle lips, the virginal straightness of her slender figure. Then he met her eyes.

Luminously and full, she returned his gaze. There was not even a reproach in her eyes—only the immaculate trust of them, the white assurance, the sublimated delicacy. His spirit was conscious of a personal baseness, an earthly retrogression. An immense regret surged through his whole being, like a hot fluid. He had doubted her with no proof, from no grounds; he had yielded to a suspicion that would embitter his memories in reproach; he had incredibly questioned the woman before him, so slenderly white, precious forgiving.

He stumbled toward her and took her hand. He touched it to his lips with his head bent.

"Forgive me!" he cried "Forgive me!"

LOCAL COLOUR

By John F. Lord

WITH scrupulous care she arrayed herself in a gorgeous purple gown before visiting her friend, the artist. He showed her around the studio and she became enthusiastic over everything.

"Look," she cried, "at the pool of sunlight on the floor! When I was a child we used to sit in the sun and say it would make us beautiful."

Suiting the action to the word, she sank to the floor.

The artist coughed and became red in the face. He resolved to discharge his man-servant for his carelessness in spilling the yellow ochre.

SEA GULL

By Tracy Carroll

GHOST of the rocks haunting the high-flung spray,
Unhappy thing
There curving, curving, crying through the day . . .
What old, old sorrow, bird whirling above,
Throbs in your song and weights your wing?
What lasts longer than love?

A WOMAN'S love is never at even temperature. It is either somewhere near 98 in the shade or hovering about zero.

GEOMETRICALLY SPEAKING

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By Harlan Thompson

PERSONS IN THE PLAY:

THE HYPOTENUSE.
AN ADJACENT SIDE.
THE OTHER SIDE.
AN INTERSECTING LINE.

SCENE:—The scene, fortunately for the producer, is the common or garden variety of stage interior. Panels of green, yellow and red curlycues compose the walls. There is an arched entrance at the back hung with red plush curtains and flappy canvas doors at either side. Having observed this much, one knows instinctively that a fireplace is upstage at the right. Its tungsten and celluloid fire is blazing away steadily as the curtain rises; but the magenta glow is not needed, as the chandelier that never was on land or sea is drenching with its glare the shiny furniture from the shop mentioned in the small type at the bottom of the programme.

(From the wings enters a youngish man, rather handsome, either because of, or in spite of a distraught air. He is dressed in a bathrobe and slippers, those, at least, being the only garments visible. He meanders over to the centre of the stage and very coolly turns his back on the audience.

For a few seconds he seems lost in thought. Then he shakes his head disapprovingly and halts it in the direction of the divan at the right. The divan straightway rolls backstage four or five feet and turns to the left. He of the Bathrobe again shakes his head. This time the divan turns around obediently and crawls up toward the fireplace, settling itself a comfortable distance away.

The young man pays it no further attention, but shades his eyes and gazes up at the chandelier. He rubs his eyes to soothe them and the lights go out, to be replaced by the merciful glow of the floor lamp over by the piano. This act of kindheartedness certainly will earn the occupant of the stage the applause of long suffering playgoers. He heeds it not, however, thereby disclosing himself as a new figure in our theatre. The arrangements now apparently satisfy the bathrobed one, for he shuffles back to the proscenium arch and leans against it while waiting to see what will happen next.

Comes a distinct pause and then to everyone's astonishment the telephone does not ring to begin the action. Instead, a second man strolls out of the door on the left. He comes leisurely across to the smoking stand near the fireplace, subconsciously whistling a little tune, and selects a cigar from the humidor. After tucking a couple

more into the pocket of his smoking jacket, he lights the one in his mouth, stands a few moments before the fire, looks at his watch and saunters back through the door to spend a little while chatting with the lady trapeze artist who closes the show.

Another pause, and the audience, having watched all this time for some familiar landmark, is just about to be off of such a nutty kind of an act, when there is the sound of a door slamming outside. One can hear a woman's voice speak to an invisible servant, thereby saving his salary and travelling expenses. Presently through the arch the owner of the voice comes, followed immediately by a man. They glance about the room cautiously.)

THE MAN

(*As all can see.*) There's no one here.

THE WOMAN

Are you sure?

THE MAN

I told you he wouldn't be home.

[*The audience decides at this point that it is going to be a regular show, after all, and settles back in peace and contentment.*]

THE WOMAN

But why did you insist on coming in with me, Harold? You are always taking these foolish chances. . . .

[*As a prelude to flinging off her opera coat she switches on the lights in the chandelier and is revealed as a radiantly beautiful creature. As the wrap is cast aside, additional opportunities are afforded for radiation. The author, if he might be permitted a suggestion, would like, for reasons good and sufficient, to have Miss Emily Stevens in the rôle. Further description is unnecessary for an understanding of Harold's next speech. Harold, by the way, is a dark, intense looking chap with a moustache, who probably wishes he had been named Juan or something equally lotharian.*]

HAROLD

Foolish chances, you say? What risk, what danger, could be foolish so long as it brings me near to you?

[*It is violating no confidence to say that this is one of Harold's best lines.*]

THE WOMAN

(*Melting.*) Oh, I know it's for my sake, Harold, but we must be careful, we must be.

HAROLD

(*With fine scorn.*) Careful? How can one be careful when he knows that the woman he loves belongs, in the eyes of the law, to another? When he knows that that other is a cold, unfeeling machine with every thought of what is due his wife crowded out by plans of business and how to get more gold and how to . . .

THE WOMAN

Stop, Harold, stop! I will not have you speak so in this house. Remember, he is my husband!

[*For the young man in the bathrobe, who has been listening to the proceedings with growing impatience, this is too much. With a gesture of despair he claps his hand to his brow, sways in anguish, fastens his fingers in his hair and hurries from view.*]

HAROLD

This is the very thing I would have you forget. By what right do you belong to him, save the cruel convention that men have set up to hold women as their chattels. Money they spend on them, as they spend it on a painting or a new motor, but where is that devotion and love that a wife has the right to demand?

THE WOMAN

(*Tremulously.*) You should talk that way to me. You must go . . . You must go.

HAROLD

Yes, I must go, sick with the want of you, because it is not *right* to tell you of my love. I must go . . . and leave you to your money grubbing husband, because the world holds that as long as he pays the bills he owns you, body and soul . . . You are a willing slave . . . Your passion for the luxuries that his gold can give you has stifled all other feeling in you . . . I had hoped it was not so—but it is . . . Good-bye . . .

[*He slowly gathers up his things and starts for the door. His companion sits with bowed head on the divan. When his exit can no longer be delayed he halts and glances back to her. She gives no sign. Finally he flings the door open and edges through, watching her anxiously as he closes it ever so slowly. At last it clicks. Silence, broken only by the stage hands moving the cages of the trained sea lions.*]

THE WOMAN

(*Scarcely above a whisper.*) Harold.

[*The door is flung open and in he pops, to stride masterfully to the divan.*]

HAROLD

I heard your cry. What is it, my love?

[*She suffers him to take her in his arms and start in on a long, adhesive kiss. While this is in progress the door at the left opens and* THE HUSBAND, *still with his cigar, enters carrying the revolver that a man with a pretty wife keeps for burglars. The woman sees him first and abruptly adjourns the session just as* HAROLD *was really beginning to enjoy it.* HAROLD *rises, rather ill at ease, while the third side of the triangle automatically fixes her hair.*]

THE HUSBAND

I seem to have disturbed your *tête-à-tête*, Mr. Chandler.

HAROLD

Pardon me, I take it that you are . . a . . . Mr. Whittier?

THE HUSBAND

John Whittier, the husband of the woman to whom you have been making love.

HAROLD

I am glad to know that you are familiar enough with lovemaking to recognize it. My information was that you were not.

WHITTIER

Perhaps you also had the idea that I was not able to protect my home from snakes such as you. I learned to deal with snakes a good many years ago. Out where I came from we used to wait until they coiled ready to strike. . . . (*Fingering the revolver*) . . . They made a good mark then.

HAROLD

(*Fast losing his poise.*) What do you mean to do?

MRS. WHITTIER

John! For God's sake—

WHITTIER

Stand back! I am not dealing with you now. My business is with Mr. Chandler.

HAROLD

And business always comes first, doesn't it, Mr. Whittier?

WHITTIER

(*Going on.*) It doesn't do to wait too long to kill a snake . . .

[*He examines the revolver carefully, glances swiftly at his wife sobbing on the divan and slowly raises the weapon. As he takes deliberate aim,* HAROLD'S *eyes stare wildly, but he does not move. Whittier's fingers are tightening on the grip when the young man of the bathrobe bursts in from the wings. Evidently he has just had time to change to evening clothes, for he is still squirming into the coat as he comes into sight.*]

THE INTRUDER

Hold on! Don't do that!

WHITTIER

Why should you be interfering, sir, in what is strictly a family affair? My honour is at stake. There is but one way out. That man must die . . . You cannot stop me. I am ready to accept the consequences.

THE INTRUDER

(*Annoyed.*) Oh, I'm not talking about *consequences*. There wouldn't be any, naturally. Don't you suppose I know as well as you do that there isn't a jury in the country that wouldn't bring in a verdict to give you a vote of thanks?

WHITTIER

Sir! I stand ready to answer at the bar of justice.

THE INTRUDER

Knowing perfectly that the unwritten law will be your comfort and your shield. Let me tell you that the home would have a pretty tough time with its sanctity if husbands didn't know they were safe in doing all the shooting they pleased. At the same time it makes the game much more attractive for adventurous spirits like our friend here when there is that little tang of danger in it.

HAROLD

(*Springing forward.*) How dare you insinuate that my intentions to this lady are a mere adventure! I am ready to pay the penalty to the man who has been wronged, but I wish to say, if it is the last thing that I ever say, that my motives were above reproach.

WHITTIER

I agree with Mr. Chandler, that you have cast aspersions upon his honour, which I, for one, do not believe. I consider him incapable of such an unworthy action as the adventure seeking you suggest and I have too high a regard for my wife to think that her lover would have any other thought than her.

HAROLD

I thank you for those words, Mr. Whittier. I am happy to know that you understand my position. There is no need for more delay. May I ask you to proceed?

WHITTIER

Thank you. I shall.

[*Again he raises the revolver, but* THE INTRUDER *will have none of it.*]

THE INTRUDER

Listen here, why is it you're so set on killing this man?

WHITTIER

(*Astonished.*) Why, what is there *to* do? What would people think if I didn't kill him?

THE INTRUDER

That's just the point I'm getting at. You're going to shoot him because you think it's the customary thing to do. You are a slave to fashion. Because of what the neighbours would say, you are willing to sacrifice every bit of originality you may possess and fall back into the same old solution of the wornout situation, just because it is the usual thing.

MRS. WHITTIER

I think there's a great deal in what he says, dear. I hate to think of going through a trial that won't be the least bit different from anybody else's.

THE INTRUDER

Go on and do something different. Be original. Get out of the rut for once in your life.

WHITTIER

(*Almost plaintively.*) I don't care if you do call it a rut. I've got to kill him. I wouldn't be . . . respectable . . . not to . . . (*Turning to Harold and resuming his former tone.*) You snake! Prepare to meet whatever God it is you call your own!

HAROLD

(*Also resuming.*) I am glad to say it is not the God of Gold that you worship, Mr. Whittier. I am ready.

WHITTIER

Then meet the fate you so richly deserve. . . . (*For the third time he makes ready the revolver.*) Have you anything more to say?

MRS. WHITTIER

(*Who is now utterly unimpressed by the proceedings.*) I would like to say this gentleman has been too polite to mention, that you two are making terrible fools of yourselves. If you only knew how you look—and talk.

THE INTRUDER

She's right. I've tried not to do anything that would hurt your feelings, but this whole thing is too silly for any use . . . Unless you want to make yourself even more ridiculous the best thing you can do is to put down that revolver. . . .

[WHITTIER, *very perceptibly abashed, lays the revolver on the table.*]

. . . That's better. Now you two see if you can't settle your difficulties without dragging in all this old stuff . . . (*To* MRS. WHITTIER.) . . . I *think* they can, don't you?

MRS. WHITTIER

I am sure of it, and I want to thank you for what you have done. It has opened my eyes . . . to many things. . . .

(*Yieldingly.*) I don't know how I can ever repay you.

THE INTRUDER

Your words have made me happy. Could I ask more?

MRS. WHITTIER

Only the poorest gifts are got by asking.

THE INTRUDER

The asking is often that which makes them poor.

[*During this conversation* WHITTIER *has sunk into the chair beside the table, his head clutched in his hands, still fearful of what he has done. Upon observing his abstraction,* HAROLD *has edged toward the table and now seizes the revolver lying there. His next words come with startling vehemence.*]

HAROLD

Stand back! . . .

[*There is no one who isn't.*]

We shall see who shall have her now.

[*As he traces circles with the muzzle in a large, flowing hand,* MRS. WHITTIER *looks around in mild surprise. Her husband, roused from his meditations, glances up, only to let his head fall again in dejection. Undiscouraged,* HAROLD *tried again.*]

Fate has delivered you into my hands. It was not meant that you should be the victor. You call me a serpent! Do you hear? The serpent is ready to strike!

WHITTIER

(*Scarcely raising his head.*) Please go way, Chandler. I don't feel like going through all that again. I'm all upset. Please go way now.

HAROLD

Do you not see that fate has delivered you into my hands? Was it for nothing that I faced the muzzle of this very weapon? That was my test—and I met it. Now it is your time to die.

WHITTIER

Chandler, I ask you kindly to go on away. I'm doing my best to feel right about not shooting you, and you're just making it harder for me.

HAROLD

It was destiny that preserved me.

WHITTIER

(*Aggrievedly.*) Call it destiny if you like, but the one I lay it on is that infernal idiot over there. If he hadn't talked so much about keeping out of a rut you wouldn't be bothering me now.

HAROLD

(*Still on the heights.*) It was destiny that decreed she should belong to me. Man-made laws are as nothing to that higher power. Know then, Whittier, that when your life is lost your wife is, also.

[*With this he turns his attention to the revolver and prepares for the killing. After aiming it once, however, he desists for the moment and turns to* MRS. WHITTIER, *who has become so busied in conversation with* THE INTRUDER *on the divan that neither has been conscious of what has been going on.*]

My love, you must be spared this unpleasantness. Go in and pack your things, dear.

WHITTIER

(*Goaded out of his dejection.*) You damned scoundrel! I'll teach you with these bare hands that you can't talk that way to my wife.

HAROLD

(*Flourishing the revolver.*) Stand back! One step and I fire! Edith, go and get ready.

MRS. WHITTIER

(*To* THE INTRUDER.) Must I obey his commands?

THE INTRUDER

No more than you would your husband's . . . Chandler, I hate to say it, but you are even worse than Whittier. Don't you know that back from the time Pythagoras put the triangle on the map the lover has been saying every one of the things that you have just said? I don't know what in the world I'm going to do with you.

HAROLD

(*Coldly.*) You seem to have no conception of my position, sir. You should realize that one does not enter into such a relationship as I now bear to Mr. and Mrs. Whittier without assuming the responsibilities that go with it. There are certain duties that one must not shirk, no matter how painful their performance may be.

THE INTRUDER

As for instance?

HAROLD

Do you suppose that I could honourably act in any other way than I have since circumstances make me the victor over the husband of the woman I love? Whoever heard of a man in my position failing to kill the husband and take the wife away with him. Not to do so would be to put one's personal feelings above one's sense of right.

THE INTRUDER

Harold, you are one of those fearfully numerous persons to whom custom and right are synonymous. There's no use arguing with you about it, because the rut is where you actually prefer to be and you couldn't be expected to make any effort to get out. Your whole life is devoted to being unconventional in as rigidly conventional a way as possible.

HAROLD

You ought to be ashamed to say such things. Do you know what you are doing? You are trying to undermine the fundamental principles of family life.

THE INTRUDER

One of the great troubles with our family life is that its fundamental principles are so rigidly fixed as to need undermining. Even the liaison, which, if anything, ought to possess some degree of freedom, is bound by the same conventional standards. Not to kill Whittier there seems to you as hideous a crime as to wear tan shoes with evening dress and your revulsion at the thought of either social blunder springs from the same constricted ideas.

HAROLD

All your words cannot sway me from my duty. The die is cast. Whittier, prepare for the end.

THE INTRUDER

(*Cutting in.*) As a gentleman, you believe in fair play, don't you, Chandler?

HAROLD

Why, certainly I do.

THE INTRUDER

Had you ever considered that you are not giving Mr. Whittier even a sporting chance? You can't do as you could if you had got the better of him fairly. *I* made him give up the idea of shooting you. That makes me your ally. So it stands now that we are two against one, and if you kill him it will be with the unfair advantage of my assistance. No gentleman could do anything so dishonourable. . . . There is nothing else to do, Chandler, except to put the revolver back where you got it.

HAROLD

(*Laying down the revolver.*) Curse you! You with your devilish arguments.

WHITTIER

(*Going to* HAROLD *and comforting him.*) I know just exactly how you feel. When he talked me out of killing *you* I felt terribly disgraced. I can understand it would be just as hard for you to give up killing me.

HAROLD

I thank you, sir, for your sympathy. . . . (*With a spiteful glance at* THE INTRUDER.) It is good to listen to someone who can respect the feelings of a gentleman.

WHITTIER

There is no use now regretting what cannot be. I can't help feeling that it would have been better all round for me to have shot you in the regular way. I take it you feel the same way about me. We have both tried to do what was right and I respect you for the effort.

HAROLD

I thank you again. Under the circumstances there is nothing more we can do. You have my sympathy, sir, as I know I have yours.

[*They shake hands gravely and move off to the left with consoling arms about each other's shoulders.* MRS. WHITTIER *comes forward in considerable agitation.*]

MRS. WHITTIER

It is all very well for you two to resign yourselves, but what about me? Neither one of you has paid the least bit of attention to my position.

WHITTIER

(*Facing about.*) Why, what do you mean, Edith?

MRS. WHITTIER

I mean that you and Harold haven't given me a thought. I haven't the least idea of what I should do. After the way you are acting now there isn't a rule in the world left for the wife to follow. I think it's real mean of you. .

[*She begins to weep.*]

HAROLD

I don't see why *you* should feel badly. *We* are the ones who have been mistreated.

MRS. WHITTIER

(*Through her tears.*) That's just the way with you men—thinking always of yourselves. Don't you see what you've done to me—fixed it so I don't know what to do at all. If one of you had killed the other it would have been all right. As it is now . . .

[*Sobs veil the rest of her remarks.*]

WHITTIER

(*Somewhat nettled.*) I'm afraid I don't quite understand the trouble you are in.

MRS. WHITTIER

Just put yourself in my place. If Harold had shot you when he might have, just as well as not, there wouldn't have been any question of the proper thing for me to do. It would have been

my place to go with him, just as every woman does. If you had killed him it would have been all right, too. Then the duty of the wife is with her husband. She is always his best witness at the trial. Everybody feels sorry for her and she looks so nice in black . . . But what is there for me to do now? Whoever heard of doing what you two have done?

THE INTRUDER

(*Whose smile has given way to yet another attack of despair.*) Ye gods! You, also! Just when I fancied I had found one, at least, free from the yolk. It's no use, I suppose, to expect anything else.

MRS. WHITTIER

Oh, don't talk like that. I didn't mean to, really, but you know I can't get away from the old ideas all at once. . . . (*Appealingly.*) Tell me what I should do.

WHITTIER

He is not the one to tell you, Edith. That is for me to say. You are my wife, whatever happens, and the law says you belong to me.

HAROLD

(*Bursting in upon them.*) Fie upon your law that is made by man! There is a higher law than that, and by that higher law she is mine!

[*As he and* WHITTIER *angrily face each other,* MRS. WHITTIER *slips away to join* THE INTRUDER *by the divan, where they proceed with an earnest conversation in tones too low to be heard by the audience.*]

WHITTIER

The law gives her to me and by that authority I intend to keep her.

HAROLD

Your authority, as you call it, consists of a few words mumbled by a clergyman while he wonders about the size of his fee. Those words, according to your ideas, give you possession of a human soul infinitely nobler than you ever dreamed of being. You consider that as long as you furnish her with clothes and money and jewels you are keeping clear the title to your property.

WHITTIER

And what, if you please, is this higher law of *yours?*

HAROLD

(*Superbly.*) The law of love! You will not find it in your statute books nor in your courts of justice, for it is far above either. I deal with matters, Mr. Whittier, with which you, to all appearances, are utterly unfamiliar.

WHITTIER

I don't care to engage in any more silly arguments. She is my wife and no power on earth can take her from me!

HAROLD

She is my love and no power in heaven or hell can keep me from taking her!

[*During this time* MRS. WHITTIER, *having arrived at a smiling understanding with* THE INTRUDER, *has risen and resumed her coat. Together they reach the door without attracting the attention of either belligerent.*]

THE INTRUDER

Before we go I just want to say that you brought it on yourselves. Goodness knows, I've tried hard enough to make you see the light. Yet in spite of all my efforts you are right back in the rut again. Same old actions, same old words—same old ending, it would have been, but for . . . Edith's assistance.

MRS. WHITTIER

You were terribly tiresome, John—and you, too, Harold.

THE INTRUDER

She agrees with me that both of you

are impossible. She is helping me to find a *new* way out. . . .

[*They start to go.*]

WHITTIER

Where are you going with her? She is mine!

HAROLD

(*To* WHITTIER.) She is not yours. She is mine!

THE INTRUDER

I am sorry, gentlemen, to inflict upon you an idea so revolutionary—but she is mine! Good-night.

[*He bows.*]

HAROLD

(*Furiously.*) Say, who in hell are you, anyway?

THE INTRUDER

Who, me? Why, I'm . . . (*He kisses* MRS. WHITTIER) . . . the author.

[*They go out.*]

CURTAIN.

REALIZATION

By Louise Strong

HOPE has flown.

I am a nonentity—a labelled spinster, as dangerous as wet gunpowder.

I never consider myself a rival of Lola Montez, nor of Gaby Deslys, but neither did I think myself utterly harmless—until now.

The blow came deadly, and sure.

I visited a married friend, a woman who trusts none of her sex and who is intensely jealous of her husband.

I stayed a week, and twice she sent her husband and me to the theatre, while she rested at home.

NOT EVEN SWORDED THOAS . . .

By Willard Wattles

THIS will I give you, a loaf of barley-bread,
A goat-skin of sour wine, sea-moss for your bed,

A shining stretch of whispering sand before the cavern door
With little curly lamb-waves to bleat upon the shore,

For when I hang the pulse to dry, and set my crook to rest
You shall feel the salt tide throbbing in my breast;

Not even sworded Thoas, though he is a haughty king,
Shall show you how the stars at night are proud as any thing.

FABLE FROM THE LITHUANIAN

By John Wellman

HE was a miserly fellow, and though he boasted of a handsome sleigh, he starved his poor horses. One day, while gliding along a snow-covered road, he heard the baying of wolves in the distance. Fear gripped him and he urged his horses onward. The hungry beasts did their best, but the wolves drew nearer and nearer. He lashed the horses furiously as he saw the howling pack behind him—but in vain. Soon he was surrounded on all sides. In a few minutes, all was over. The famished horses devoured the pack voraciously.

APART

By Sara Teasdale

I LIE awake and think of the many rivers
  Running between us, restless and wild with spring;
Of blossomy orchards under the April starlight
  Where all day long the mating blackbirds sing.

A thousand miles with many a sleepless city
  That holds the spring in the hurrying heart of man,
And many a meadow waking with April ardour
  Where all day long the squirrel and rabbit ran. . . .

I lie awake and think of the many rivers
  Swelling with spring, that break their banks in twain—
The whole world trembles with joy—but we, we only
  Stand apart in lonely and arrogant pain.

SOME husbands believe they should be as polite to their wives as they are to their stenographers, but very few wives believe that they should be as considerate of their husbands as they are of their butlers.

L'APRES-MIDI D'UN FAUNE

By Odell Shepard

VERY timidly he came out of the forest at the foot of the hill, pausing a long time behind the larger pine trees to peer across the purple valley with serious, wondering eyes. He had heard vague tales of those who lived down here—creatures like himself and yet unlike, for they had no cloven hoofs, no horns behind the ears, and they rode storming through the quiet woods on huge, raucous monsters of steel. He wondered what they could be like, yet there was nothing he feared so much as some actual encounter that would answer all his questions suddenly.

But he could neither see nor hear anything at all alarming. There were only wide, quiet meadows before him, tremulous in the heat of a September afternoon. Half way up the opposite hill a little aspen tree twinkled in the breeze. A leisurely hawk was floating far above. He stepped cautiously into the clearing.

Suddenly he smelt water. He turned his head away from the breeze and listened. He heard water! It must be a river, or at least a large brook—a rare and precious thing in the high hills where he had spent his life and whither his fathers had been driven long ago. Forgetting all about the hornless and hoofless monsters said to infest this region, he crossed the little clearing in a flash and leapt headlong into the stream.

After half an hour of splashing, swimming and floating on his back under the alder branches, he stepped out, dripping, and sat on a flat rock by the bank. It was cool and comfortable there. He thought he should like to stay a long time. Gauzy domes of azure and emerald came sailing down the shaded water, and he selected the larger ones, trying to hold his breath until they burst. Dragon-flies went tacking and steering up and down like tiny boats of the air. A sand-piper flew down near at hand and bobbed and pirouetted until the faun laughed and threw a stone at it.

Leaning forward with his head sunk between his hairy shoulders, he could see his reflection in the glassy stream, disturbed ever so little by tiny ripples circling out from the drops of water that fell from his fetlocks. This was a new and wonderful thing, for the streams of his hill country were too swift in current to make a clear image. A few feet from the bank grew some tall and slender reeds, good for whistles. He thought he would get one of these and notch it into a pipe, as an old and very learned faun had once taught him to do, and then make for himself some little tune about the happiness he felt sitting there among the shadows by the cool water.

But just as he slipped from the rock he saw a thing that sent all thought of whistles out of his head. He stood for a full minute gazing at it, while the chuckling water swirled by about his shaggy legs. Not two hundred feet from him, on the further side of the stream, sat a wonderful creature, looking as steadily at him as he at her.

Some dim ancestral memory told him that this was a female of the hoofless and hornless variety, and he recalled, moreover, that the females had been kind anciently to fauns. At any rate, he was not afraid. He waded the stream in a shallow place and then

crossed two long, parallel lines of steel resting upon transverse logs of wood which were supported, in turn, by a gravel embankment. He paid little attention to this, for his eyes were fixed upon the smiling, seductive eyes which looked unwaveringly at him over a polished shoulder.

He could see by this time that she, too, had evidently been taking a bath, for her hair appeared to be wet. Clearly, however, she was not bathing in a stream. She seemed to be sitting in some whitish thing that hid from him most of her body—all of it, in fact, except her head and shoulders. Ah, well, he thought, that might be one of their shy little ways, and he must be prepared for such differences. In one hand she held aloft something red and oblong—he could not tell what.

As he drew near he noticed for the first time that she had not moved. This, too, was a queer trick, but he must not let her see that he had noticed it. Anyhow, there was still the same reassuring smile. He allowed himself to gambol a little when some fifty feet away. He threw a somersault or two, and a cart-wheel. Her gesture did not change, so that he was obliged to decide that it was well enough suited to express surprise and admiration. He did some backward somersaults and a dazzling succession of hand-springs, with no different result.

Then he began again and went through his entire repertoire of tumbling tricks. It was a warm day and he began to perspire. Glancing up at his audience toward the end, he saw that she held the same attitude. He felt mildly disgusted.

Finally, giving up all efforts at a gymnastic wooing in form, he strode straight toward her. This, he knew, was not according to the etiquette of fauns, but he had begun to distrust all of the rules he knew. And as he went, a vague trouble dawned in his serious eyes. For the last few feet he almost ran, and when he reached her he did a curious thing. He reached high up and put his finger on the rosy round of her shoulder. She was hard! And she was flat! Nothing in all the lore and tradition of fauns had prepared him for this. He walked round to see how she looked on the other side. She *had* no other side!

After a second of reeling bewilderment, he turned and ran very swiftly back toward the stream, toward his own hill country of horns and hoofs and three dimensions. The more he ran the more frightened he grew, and his blood pounded in his ears. Perhaps that is why he did not hear the scream of the lightning express as it rounded the bend. Even if he had heard it, he would have run only the faster, for he would have thought it the voice of the hard, flat female, already out of the tank and pursing him one-sidedly down the hill.

On the next day there was something in the newspapers about a "nude body, crushed beyond recognition, evidently that of a foreigner." But the bathing lorelei sent across the river the same steady, amorous glance which had lured that foreigner to his death, holding aloft in her left hand a cake of reddish soap.

Beneath her bathtub, in two-foot letters, ran the legend:

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ABOUT FASHIONS AND OTHER THINGS

By Various Hands

COUNT MICHAEL DE TORBY

Extreme good taste was the leading characteristic of the original designs by Count Michael de Torby, of Russia, shown in the Chinese salon at 15, Hanover Square. The proceeds of the exhibition were in aid of the Officers' Families Fund. As Count Torby is unavoidably prevented at the moment by unfortunate circumstances from fighting with the Allies, he has turned his energies and most undoubted talent into a channel whence, we hope, he will be able to retrieve some of his family misfortunes. As a designer there is no doubt he will take a very high place, and if he can inspire Englishwomen to adopt the great elegance and beauty of line that he advocates, he will be a real acquisition to the country when things have once more settled down to their normal conditions, and we can again take an interest in clothes.

Velvet and fur played an important part in the winter coats and skirts. The coats were plain, and mostly rather long. Copper colour and wine shade predominated, while pale greys and blacks almost monopolized the evening dresses, except when pale gold or silver tissue-brocade was used. These frocks were mostly very plain, loose, and only slightly moulded to the figure with floating draperies from the shoulders. There was very little that was at all "stagey." Almost every frock was wearable, and entirely suitable for the "grande dame"—a very rare virtue in these days, when so many models are only fit for the demi-mondaine or the chorus lady.

Those of us who give time and thought to our outward appearance are trying to solve the knotty problem of "How to be beautiful, though cold!" There is a fortune waiting for the one who solves that riddle, for wars may come and coal may go, but the vanity of the eternal feminine lives on for ever! The pessimist is in his element, and points with sober glee to the quantity of holly berries that are already forming on the bushes—sure prophets of a hard and chilly winter, red noses, chilblains, and all the other little discomforts that flesh is heir to. Please note I am quoting the pessimist. The optimist is as cheery as ever. The text for the next few months is "For many shall be cold, but few will be frozen!" Because, our clever couturières have come to the rescue with something that surely was never made before, and that is the padded frock. Several of our leading actresses have already fallen victim to it, and very cosy they look. Of course the padded frock is perfectly plain and straight with the usual loose girdle. The thickness of the material will not allow of anything else, or we should indeed become most mountainous ladies, and I believe it is only the Turk who really admires that style of beauty.

Matalassé effects are to the fore, and this lends itself admirably to warmth. Matalassé, brocade padded and used as a waistcoat is delightful.

The golf jersey that promises to be the most popular is the straight pull-on type known as a "sweater." I am told that the fashion for women was first started a great many years ago by three sisters who used to row a great deal on the Thames, and one day had the brilliant inspiration of borrowing their brothers' sweaters, and found them so comfortable that they adopted them for good. History does not relate what the brothers said! To-day these garments have blossomed out into wonderful affairs worked in many gorgeous shades of wool, and the very newest of all boasts pockets and a collar

When My Boy Comes Home.

By MIMOSA.

Wrinkles and Grey Hair Must Disappear.

TWO years can make a great change in a woman's appearance at any time, but two years of war worries often adds ten years to one's apparent age, and this was what the two years during which her husband has been away had done to Gladys Summers. She had aged tremendously; little lines and wrinkles had formed round her eyes, and deep lines around the mouth, and her hair had become tinged with grey. In fact, she was in despair as to what the man who had left her looking so young and fit would think of her when he returned.

Six Weeks to Effect a Transformation.

WHEN she came to confide her troubles to me she had just six weeks in which to improve herself, for by that time he was due home.

Six weeks isn't long, but I felt sure that if she really tried she could make a very great improvement.

Removing the Wrinkles.

TO smooth out the wrinkles I made her get a little pure mercolised wax, rub it gently into her face and neck every night, working the wax into the skin very carefully, and rubbing always in an upward and outward direction. Mercolised wax has the effect of gently and imperceptibly peeling off all the old dead skin, and with it the lines and wrinkles, which, as you probably know, are only on the outer skin and not beneath it, as so many people think. Every night the wax was applied evenly all over the face, and gradually the old skin and the wrinkles disappeared, and the fresh young complexion underneath soon became apparent, soft, smooth, and clear.

Restoring the Grey Hair.

HAIR dyes are an abomination; Gladys and I were both agreed on that point, and, what was far more important, she was dreadfully afraid that if she used a dye, the colour might not be quite the same as her own, and that her husband would notice the difference.

I advised her to get two ounces of tammalite, and to use it regularly for a week. The tammalite should be mixed with three ounces of Bay Rum, and applied to the roots with a small sponge.

Once a fortnight I told her she must shampoo her hair, so as to keep it in good condition, and for this she used a dessertspoonful of stallax dissolved in warm water. After a stallax shampoo it is not necessary to rinse the hair, as the hair is left soft and silky, with a natural wave which is most pleasing.

The Finishing Touches.

INSTEAD of using powder Gladys got an ounce of cleminite and dissolved it in water. This she dabbed over her face and neck, and allowed it to dry on the skin, while to give a slight colour to the cheeks she applied a little colliandum with a piece of cotton-wool. Colliandum is quite unique, as it cannot be detected, and as the atmosphere of the room grows warmer so the colour deepens slightly, giving an absolutely natural appearance.

that is really a long straight scarf attached to the back of the neck of the jersey, and has ends that can be wrapped round the throat like a comforter, or allowed to hang loosely. Some have a deep "V" in the front to allow a big enough opening to slip over the head, while others button on the shoulders. Another conceit that has had its origin in the wish for extra warmth is the coat and skirt with a detachable cloak to match. The one I have in mind at the moment was a very simple costume of navy cloth fastening with a row of self covered buttons down the front. These buttons also ornamented the outside of the sleeve from shoulder to wrist, but they were for use as well as ornament like every other wartime notion. A cleverly cut cape of the same material coming well below the waist and sporting a large fur collar could be fastened at will on to the sleeves, so giving additional warmth to the back and neck, besides being extremely smart in effect.

Now that the ban on dancing for officers has been removed there will be a rush for real evening frocks once more. We have missed them very much, and will welcome them back with joy. Nothing was ever so alluring as the floating draperies that grace our ballrooms now, and after the austere uniforms that most of our girls have to wear all day the ethereal daintiness of georgette and tulle is a real delight. We are almost early Victorian in our love for layers upon layers of filmy materials, with rosebuds thrown carelessly here and there. But whereas in those days a crinoline was worn beneath all this loveliness, to-day it is replaced by a very skimpy underskirt of crépe de chine or silver tissue. Other frocks have a long straight corselet effect of charmeuse, and a skirt entirely made of uneven lengths of tulle suggesting the petals of a flower. Georgette and wool work is a curious combination, but one that has a distinct cachet of its own. A pale lavender georgette blouse had a big sailor collar made of thick white wool, and the front was also heavily embroidered with the same. In fact wool in any form of trimming is enjoying a tremendous popularity.

Beaver or nutria is the fur of the moment, and it certainly is vastly becoming, particularly when made into a gigantic collar which can be cuddled up round the nose and chin leaving the eyes peeping out just beneath a little hat made of the same. Very tantalizing to the curious male, and very alluring! After all it is the little things of dress that count so much, and are particularly telling in these days when one costume has to do the work of three or four pre-war frocks.

The French woman knows the value of her favourite saying: "Bien coiffée, bien chaussée, bien gantée violà la toilette d'une dame!" However she forgot to mention the collar, and this is most important, as an unbecoming neck finish can make or mar a whole costume. Every autumn there is an attempt to bring back high collars to favour, and this year its disciples are really meeting with success.

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